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Illustration take

KIDNAP KIDDING

The Blue Savant and The Nonsense User's Daughter

講談社 NOVELS

Kidnap Kidding

The Blue Savant and the Nonsense User's Daughter

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Table of Contents

First Day (1) ------- The Devil Comes and Runs People over

First Day (2) ------- Queen (Castle) Bee

First Day (3) ------- The Kunagisa Family

First Day (4) ------- The Village of Nine Graves

Second Day (1) ------- White Old Mask

Second Day (2) ------- The Twins Are Meager

Second Day (3) ------- Prison Gate Inquire

Second Day (4) ------- Blue Hair Memorial

Second Day (5) ------- The True Intent Murders

Epilogue ------- Blue and Red

Characters Introduction

Kunagisa Rui ———————— Grandfather.

Kunagisa Hoda ———————— Grandmother.

Kunagisa Nao ———————— Uncle.

Kunagisa Tomo ———————— Mother.

Kunagisa En ———————— Uncle.

Kunagisa Too ———————— Cousin.

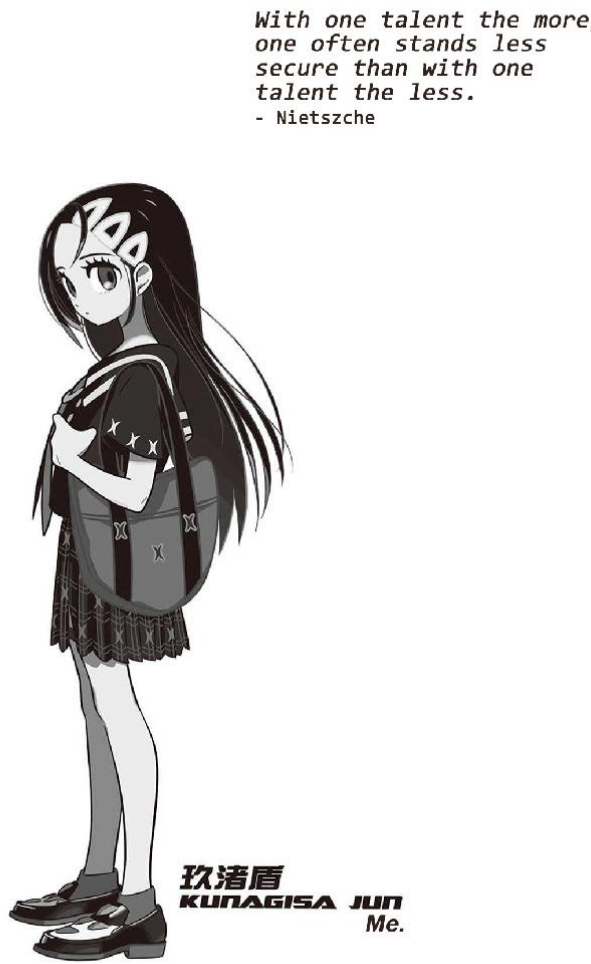
Kunagisa Chika ———————— Cousin.

Kunagisa Jun ———————— Me.

Chiga Bonbori ———————— Maid Apprentice.

Aikawa Jun ———————— Contractor.

Nonsense User ———————— Dad.



I am Kunagisa Jun. A proud shield[1].

A 15-year-old first-year high school student attending Private Sumiyuri School. Strictly speaking, it's a boarding school, so I'm basically living at school rather than attending it. My grades are somewhat above average. I'm not

particularly good at any subject, but I'm not bad at any either. And I'm okay with that. In fact, I would even say it's pleasant this way. Well-behaved and with no aspiration. I'm a member of the American Football Club and the Cheerleading Club, but I don't actually participate in any activities. I just wanted the uniforms. My future dream is to be an editor at Shounen Jump or Marvel Comics. I actually wanted to say that my dream is to be the editor-in-chief, but there's a first step for anyone. Someday this will be a trivial difference. Hm?

At any rate, anyway, you could surely think of me as just a "normal, commonplace high school girl with no redeeming features that exists everywhere".

Yeah, just like right behind you too.

Of course, it seems my parents once did things like saving the world, ending the world, solving murder cases, hiding murder cases, causing wars, ending wars, saving friends, chasing friends, being saviors, being major criminals, etc., etc., but I have no relation with it. Even if there actually is a parent-child relationship. To be honest, I don't know even a bit of things such as my parents' wrong deeds and romance, and I don't want to know it either. Much less want to boast about it.

Firstly, rather than those rampant free-spirited weirdos who couldn't ever properly raise a child, I received a stronger influence from my babysitter. You could easily say that half of my personality is taken from that sitter-san's influence. So, if you are here wanting to read the "Then and Now" of those Nonsense User and Blue Savant who, after a long time, turned into a normal uncle and a normal aunt, the right answer is to close this book right now. Fortunately, those two's fiction, or rather, stories, are even now, 20 years later, accumulating several printings. Actually, several is a bit of a pretentious way to say it, but now that digital editions have become popular and the concept of "out of print" has vanished from the publishing business, it isn't that difficult to find a nostalgic book. However, there is pride in me enough to modestly claim that reading this book of mine is still an option too. I'm their daughter after all.

A blood-sequence rather than a novel sequel.

Really, I'm serious about this.

Besides, although by overly pretending to be a normal high school girl, I ended up saying right from the beginning stuff like your typical rebellious age would, I don't mean to pathetically pretend so much to a point I would say I didn't receive any influence from my parents at all. For instance, this way of beginning the story with a self-introduction was because of Dad, that one who, since my early childhood, severely taught me — severely, annoyingly taught me — things like the ways of efficiently drawing attention and interest from the reading with the first person point of view of an unknown guy; the page-turning techniques of incorporating a next episode preview-like climax from the beginning, like a song that starts from the hook; his prideful description tricks that require reading two times to finally understand its meaning; the

pedantic rhetorics that invite intellectual curiosity by presenting minor quotes and suggestive random knowledge; those things that are not an antithesis in any way of those existing books that start with a really blunt catchphrase template like “This is a story of a #####”.

Dad’s Nonsense Series - No. 1.[2]

First, introduce yourself. No matter who you’re talking to.
Then, make them introduce themselves. No matter who they are.

It’s clear that it’s not about some manners course’s passage saying that, if you want to talk to someone, not saying your name wouldn’t be polite, let’s stop talking with people we do not even know who they are. It’s the Nonsense User’s saying. Firstly, while that Dad of mine will discipline me about this, he won’t even say his own name, no matter who he’s talking to. It’s probably because of this cheeky type of life that he ended up facing so much trouble in his youth. Not just once, but twice, and thrice, and again and again[3].

It’s just my opinion, or common opinion **(Dad’s Nonsense Series - No. 37. Contradicting premises can coexist)**, but the parents who project the things they couldn’t do on their children are the worst ones.

This is selfish.

A toxic species of selfish[4].

By the way, Dad’s Nonsense Series goes up to 100. It gets you fed up with it just by thinking, right? Even if it’s published in Mephisto Readers’ Club, it’s only an “old man’s grumbling” too long to write on a teacup[5]. It’s quite understandable that I would want (right after sitter-san retired) to live in a dormitory. Luckily, I was blessed roommate-wise.

If I get talking about the roommate stuff it will take long, so I will go back to talking about my name. You guys may have thought that using “Shield[6]” for a girl’s name is just out of question, right? Or else, is it that, in current Japan, talking about a name being proper for a girl or a boy would be a hell-going level of capital sin worth of canceling? Even if there were a boy named Hanako or a girl named Tarou[7], I’d still not care. Unfortunately, this Sumuyuri School that I am enrolled at — and living at — is a girls’ school and, hence, a boys-forbidden one, that only hires male teachers if they have no divorce history, a wife, and two or more children. I wouldn’t be reluctant to discuss fiercely these job requirements containing such a complex problem as this, but it would be against the original point here. It could also be against cancel-proofing as well. The important thing is that I don’t really know what type of names boys my age have. While I am deeply ashamed, it shows my scarce understanding of diversity.

Dad’s Nonsense Series - No. 67

Be a minority that respects diversity.

Making a distinction between minority and diversity really feels like a typical thing for Dad.

What was I talking about again? About my name. A names' talk.

Jun8.

From what I've heard, it comes from someone Dad respects. In elementary school, there was this homework about "asking both your parents about what your name means", truly a concern lacking homework towards children who don't have both parents, and it was then that I learned about my name (I'm serious). I see, so my father respected Captain America; it felt like seeing an unexpected side of him.

However, it seems only the name's reading originated from that.

So, the part about using such an austere kanji is totally Dad's fault, isn't it? That was what I thought, but I didn't say anything. About the time I was 7 years old, I had already sensed that having an argument with my dad was a fruitless effort.

Really.

Wasn't the common sense that giving weird names to children is a type of abuse fifteen years ago? It couldn't have been Captain Marvel at least?

It's through these various circumstances that I don't like my name that much — however, Dad still says you should always introduce yourself.

Proudly.

Hence, I've said my name right at the start. Although impolite, I want to say that, just as described, this is a product of Dad's teachings.

I am Kunagisa Jun. A proud shield.

Just for reference, I somewhat like the surname Kunagisa I was given. Somewhat. The reason is that it's kinda cool. However, this time I'll end up being exceedingly messed around because of this hybrid of a cool surname and a name I don't like. This beginning named "self-introduction" surprisingly ended up getting too long, but what is going to unfold here is a story like this.

If you're worrying about whether you should turn the next page (or actually worrying about whether you should do your next page tap), I will anticipate the two main lessons one could learn from this book. The first one is "when naming a child, please be careful and think it through" and the other one is "in case your surname is Kunagisa, follow the legal procedures and change it right now".

You think I am *kidding*?

Really, I'm serious about this.

By the way, while Dad's Nonsense Series does go up to 100, compared to that, Mom is really simple. Dad may be fussy about this and that with his teachings, and this obedient daughter here, frankly speaking, may not follow even half of all this, but anyway, due to this simplicity, I've been able to follow Mom's instruction strictly. Because if I break this rule, there will be no way to gloss it over. As a matter of fact, this restriction's content is quite hard to allow in current society, and it really is a prime case of an inconvenient child abuse, causing a heavy influence, a bad influence, with no end in my personality development. But besides that, its premise is that it allows me to do everything as I please, becoming a permissive parenting that is really close to neglect, so it can't be helped. Also, if this "Only Neat Rule to Follow" isn't obeyed "I will really kill you, okay?" was what she said while smiling.

I call it Mom's Absolute Law.

Don't touch machines.

First Day (1) - The Devil Comes and Runs People Over[9]

0

Appearances can deceive people 90% of the time.

(Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 31)

1

Do you know the paradox of autonomous driving?

Autonomous driving is about the dream-system that evolves an automobile into the literal meaning of automobile. It analyzes traffic's situation with sensors and cameras and, without troubling the driver's hands, without even troubling the driver's feet, takes actions through computers, like automatically maintaining distance between vehicles, putting on the brakes, doing a parallel parking, and running in reverse through S-curves. It can detect alcohol through exhalation and stop the engine, becoming a link to having an automobile in the broader sense of the word. And finally, as for being a paradox, I'm talking about contradiction.

Proud as a shield[1].

What happens when you collide the strongest lance with the strongest shield? Or what about when Aquiles and the turtle race? With Aquiles starting a bit after the turtle, but racing with his leg strength the whole earth one lap and ending up being left in the turtle's dust that he should have surpassed? Well, it's a bit different though, but still, to let one thinking that "it isn't supposed to be like this" is what paradoxes are. It's by no means a dog's name.

So, what does these terms combination that is autonomous driving paradox means? It's a thought experiment about a dream technology that, originally, would put an end to tragic traffic accidents. However, supposing this technology that would actually prevent accidents no matter what, if this AI that would put humanity to a deep sleep like state of passiveness actually got incorporated in cars, what would happen?

A common answer would be that tragedies at crosswalks would not happen anymore. Simple. Common and simple. Although it's not the case for me, normally these are not compliments.

I'm not talking about that, it's about the worst outcome imaginable, which is that *pedestrians would stop following crosswalks altogether*. It's not just about "if we cross over together there is no need to be afraid", it's about the vehicles that would step the brake pedal automatically by recognizing pedestrians — that won't cause accidents no matter what — not being a threat to them anymore.

Basically, there would be no need to follow traffic lights anymore.

The vehicles made to prevent possible traffic accidents that supposedly would revolutionize traffic signaling would actually stop their functionality. By pursuing too much safety, the crosswalks would become a no-man's-land. People would run towards the red light like a cow. People would be full charging into it just like a gnu herd. It's almost like a metaphor, but it shows how people won't always act in a logical way… Actually, if you say logic, that situation is the most logical it can get.

For the time being, autonomous driving is no more than assistance to humans operating it, so vehicles aren't falling into a malfunction like that right away (left away?), but in a not too far future it's a paradox that certainly will happen.

A F1 car that should pass by us slow humans in a flash would maybe end up being left in the dust of us sluggish humans before anyone notices… Surprisingly, with this process, maybe carbon dioxide emissions and its subsequent global warming would be put to an end.

That's to say, this is a not yet seen, not before long yet seen future's talk. To face this paradox and get bewildered by that, firstly one must live up to that point — without facing any accidents.

Look at your right, left, and right again.

And then raise your hand at the crosswalk[10].

I get the right, left, right part, but why must one raise their hand while crossing it?

I've never seen an adult doing this, you know? When I was an innocent kid I would have these doubts, but in the end, it seems to be that, if a child does not raise their hand, the driver won't see them. Isn't that a structural flaw that goes beyond autonomous driving? Whatever.

With the summer vacation after first year students' first semester ending at Private Sumiyuri High School, in order to come back home, I was walking through a crosswalk in an intersection in Kyoto — by the way, our Sumiyuri High School is located in a part of Kyoto that Kyoto citizens often wouldn't think of it as Kyoto. As for me, I'd like to say that only Sakyou-ku isn't Kyoto, but when I am like this in the heart of the city, yeah, it really has a "**THIS IS KYOTO**"[11] vibe to it.

As much as I'm in the rebel teenager phase right now, I'm not edgy enough to just not come back home during summer vacation. With only a few months I couldn't become a school delinquent or a *gyaru*. From what I've heard, Dad hasn't been at his parents' home for more than 10 years. Are you sane? Or actually, it was when he went to show the face of the granddaughter also known as me to his parents that he first ever went back his parents' house, so it's frightening. A double meaning in my first time ever at that house being also

the first time of homecoming in Dad's life.

Nevertheless, it's still better than with Mom. She has completely cut off her family. Good grief, those two are always an ideal good example for me of what I shouldn't do.

While deeply thinking about this stuff and walking this crossing at Shijou Kawaramachi — I got run over. A shock so strong that I thought my neck was cut off[12].

2

I know it seems repetitive, but going back to the autonomous driving paradox, I may have ended up saying things that sound scary, or may have cast dark clouds in the future, but as a matter of fact, the traffic becoming a no-man's-land due the spread of autonomous driving isn't happening. Just not happening. For what it is worth, is a thought experiment, an academic theory.

And that's because perfect computers are, not "just for now", products of fantasy. I'd like to say that's something that would only happen in SF novels, but especially for SF novels' case, this isn't something you would see in them. The setting we got used to, with those imperfect computers going on rampage in science fiction is what really gets close to real life machines behavior.

In other words, no matter what elaborated scheme an AI has, errors happen. Even if it isn't something like a bug, it's hard to completely get rid of risks. With a probability of zero point zero zero zero something percent, accidents can still happen. It may be a chance much smaller than the ones brought up human's immatureness, but as long as there are possibilities like mistaking the red light for the green light, perceiving a pedestrian as just an amount of air, mistaking its computer feet while stepping the break and gas pedals, the pedestrians will have to follow the traffic lights.

It's the same feeling that, even if airplanes almost never crash, a person may still not want to get on one — just like you can't trust humans, you can't trust machines either. And even if we imagine a perfect, flawless computer, as long as it's a physical computer, its own existence is a weak point.

In short, even if there are no design flaws or bugs, it will have a failure with degradation over time. As much as I'd like to represent here all sulky teens' sense and say that nothing is absolute in this world, this is absolute. There is no machine that won't break.

Not having a regenerating metabolism is a fatal weak point for a physical machine. Even if, at the time you bought it, it was a wonderful supercar with an autonomous drive built-in, someday some problems like rusting, melting, becoming weaker, connection issues, and battery issues will happen… When it becomes outdated, it may even become unable to deal with hook turn rules if it isn't updated for the always changing traffic laws. Saying every time that you

must buy the newest model is something that overpasses a bit the realm of car inspections.

Machines break. Like humans.

That's to say, it's also true that this "modern era", where by having a smartphone everyone can become a live streamer, wasn't imagined even by SF authors. So I shouldn't be careless saying these things like I know it all, even then it may be that in ten or twenty years from now a perfect AI is implementing traffic conditions with no paradoxes. There may be a chance that even kick scooters have an absolutely flawless built-in AI. Even the chance of a machine made with an organic body that not only has a metabolism but also a long lifespan isn't zero (in this case, it may have a decomposition problem but, even that is nothing more than one of the 17 sustainable development goals). The field of vision and the worldview of this 15-year-old me are limited.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 17.

Take a straight look at the narrowness of your field vision.

However, even for me, by my 15 years of human experience, there is something I can affirm. In front of human evil, safety devices and safety valves are mere lamps. Turning off a switch, hacking, rewriting its program, breaking the AI physically, evading the alarm system…

In the future, it may be possible to protect against all traffic accidents.

However, for the *traffic incidents*, protecting against all of them won't be possible, for all eternity, just like for wars, it won't be possible either. The act of deliberately trying to run over a person can't be stopped by computers. Like on this day, when I was hit by a car at Shijou Kawaramachi crossing.

A *kidding* just as if my body has turned into a pudding. Actually, if I say killing, it might be closer to reality.

There is often this depiction of having your brain shaken when being punched hard right in your temple, but this was the whole-body version of that. It felt that maybe my skin, muscles, organs, and bones have been mixed into a paste form.

In terms of sensation, I even felt as if I had been sent flying through several hundred meters, landing on Kamogawa's water no doubt, but, well, in reality, I was mid-air for about some meters, and then slammed against the asphalt, so then realizing that I actually wasn't turned into a paste form.

Not a pudding but actually a *daikon* maybe?

It did feel like I was scraped through a *daikon* grater… The pain of having my skin scraped was so intense I could vow to never use the grater in a *daikon* again, no matter how delicious a mackerel pike could be placed on my plate. I may not be a vegetarian, but I shouldn't lose my compassion towards plants.

Well, if you think something like “It’s so pitiful, so you shouldn’t eat it” it may as well be you being haughty. The apple fruit is mercilessly plucked off, ruthlessly chewed, harshly digested and then its seed, as if it was an advertisement, is scattered here and there, thus the ethical view on this is not simple… Is it like livestock, which its meat can be eaten, has been reproduced safely because of this?

Wait, no, my train of thought is getting disturbed.

That’s natural if you’re being grated like grated apples, however. Or I may say that’s even more natural if your brain is like a milkshake right now. And it isn’t even something at the smoothie level.

Aah — right, right.

This is how I am going to die isn’t it?

I was born from those parents, so I had my mind made up to the fact that I probably won’t have a peaceful death from age on a tatami-mat, but I always thought of dramatic situations such as being stabbed in the back, being hit on the head, or going through a tremendous torture, but dying from a traffic accident is just too beyond expectations.

This isn’t good.

I regretted it.

There’s a limit for being conceited. Thinking that special people have special deaths prepared for them, it’s a thinking pattern that now, when turned into text and looking at it, is just too embarrassing, isn’t it?

What is even special about me?

Just my parents that are special.

I don’t know whether the number one cause of death for Japanese is cancer or something else, for us, the young, the closest danger is traffic accidents, and even then, just because I was completely protected in the dormitory safe zone, I’ve lost the sense of danger about it.

The fact that it was in the green light is of no help at all. Apart from trials and sentences, the fact that I was hit in the green light meaning that there’s no life risk isn’t a stipulated article in the Road Traffic Act.

I should have looked to the right, left, and right again, raising my hand in the crosswalk. Because my height isn’t even 150 cm.

Dad’s Nonsense Series - No. 89.

Walk the pedestrian by crossing it vertically.

I wonder what he meant with this. Dad's Nonsense Series has quite a few incomprehensible sayings. Or rather, most of them are incomprehensible. Perhaps this No. 89 is just blaming the innocent thought of crossing horizontally just because the lines are horizontal. It also may be that he's recommending the simple playful heart of doing hopscotch stepping on the white lines only[13].

It's kinda stylish that I'm thinking about Dad's nonsense in my last moments. It makes me want to laugh.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 46

Laugh if you want to.
It is in times you are drowning you have to cling the most.

Let's put aside what those facial-expressions-lacking-Father has to say for now. Nevertheless, if you got dejected from this beginning, then there's no way to apologize for that but, I didn't die here.

And also, is not that I'll be entering the story arc where I become a spiritual detective after losing my life in a traffic accident. Really, I'm serious about this, but what my babysitter read for me instead of picture books was Yuu★Yuu★Hakusho, so I learned my ethical view from that. Hence my heart teacher is Sensui Shinobu. Who else can I look up to besides him? Although, to instill Sensui Shinobu's ideology into a young child, that babysitter's viewpoint is closer to Isuki, isn't it? Is what I think sometimes these days after turning 15 years old. That reminds me, the dormitory at Sumiyuri School banned bringing manga, so how H U N T E R × H U N T E R has being lately?

To know what is going on with Kurapika and Leorio too, I can't bring myself to die here. Good manga can prolong people's lifespan.

"Ooh. You're alive. Just as you'd expect from Ii-tan's daughter."

I heard this voice from the sky.

I've had this expectation filling me that perhaps it's that detective assistant Botan-chan's voice, but it wasn't that. —Did she say *Ii-tan*?

From what it seems, it's the driver from the car that hit me. It looks like she got out of the driver's seat and rushed over to rescue the vulnerable road user that was sent flying — well, no.

"Also, that's what you'd expect from the one that inherited *my name*."

And then.

With me being covered in blood, looking upwards and lying down, she trampled — she crushed my head underfoot like a watermelon.

I had no time or leeway to ask her who she was, however, just with this

first impression, this first contact that was more shocking than a first kiss, I had more than enough to instinctively know who this person that trampled my head was.

The woman that hits people like a piano.

Humanity's Strongest Contractor — Aikawa Jun.

3

Of course, when I say she crushed my head it is obviously literary rhetoric. When it says that someone tilted their head when being puzzled, it's not like they really tilted their head. If you really shrug your shoulders, then it actually could be an overreaction, and hence, it would result in the other party shrugging their shoulders in exchange. It would be an embarrassment. Just like that, my head wasn't really crushed.

But I really was stepped on.

With a high heel.

With a tip that seemed like it could actually pierce asphalt, I almost got my eyeball pierced through, but just in time, I was able to move my head, so my forehead went closer to her toes instead, escaping the worst situation.

Even the heel's toe had a design that could pierce me, though. That heel, edgier than a teenager, really fits well its owner's personality, just like Cinderella's glass slippers.

When I had these thoughts, it was already sometime after that, because at the actual moment she stepped on me, I completely lost my consciousness that I kept through sheer willpower after being hit by a car to this shock of being stepped on.

Now that I think of it, by evading that high hill, I raised my head in a weird way, so not only was my forehead trampled, but the back of my head also was beaten into the ground by momentum, so me going through this sandwich was also no good, maybe. I even thought that if I eat a sandwich from now on, it will be an open one only.

And it's stylish, isn't it?

So, when I realized, I was in the passenger seat of a red supercar. This expression "supercar" may be an obsolete word now, but don't think too much about it. I mean, if I say the name of the real vehicle here, there will be a lot of stuff about copyrights and all. This is my wish after maybe going to the afterlife. Ain't I pitiful? Please grant it.

"Oh, you woke up, Jun-chan. Mwahaha, is kinda weird, isn't it? Jun-chan

calling Jun-chan as Jun-chan."

The driver gripping the handle said it laughing at me, while I didn't fully recover my consciousness yet — while continuously going over the speed limit, ignoring the traffic lights, and running in the passing lane like it's natural.

I really can't say this car's name.

Was being hit a nightmare? Or is the nightmare now sitting next to a driver that could have her license suspended a hundred times and it still wouldn't be enough?

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 41

Is the dream now when we are butterflies?
Or is it now when we are pupa that it is a dream?

While remembering the lesson that sounds like an exaggerated dream about being a butterfly[14], no wait, if this flashy driver here, wearing a suit redder than this car, is who I think she is, it's obvious there's no way she has a license to begin with.

A driver's license isn't necessary at all.

She doesn't even need a driver's license.

If it's that person, for who not only speed limits but strength limits too don't exist, like she had been granted a Kabukimono License [15]from the moment she was born, then every single restriction can be ignored.

At least she's allowed enough to send flying a 15-year-old tiny (there is no literary rhetoric here, actually tiny) girl right in the middle of a crosswalk, and on top of it, to throw the bloodstained girl in the passenger's seat and then escape from this place with multiple observers without a single one reporting it.

Or else I can't imagine it.

I can't imagine the scene where she's questioned by the police and then shows her license.

"…Aunt Jun."

"Whoa, don't say it like in Aunt May."

"That's a really good way to take what I said… Is it okay if I fasten the seatbelt? By the law of inertia, I am about to get thrown out of here, so I am scared."

I didn't say the car's name, but I can at least say that it is an open-top car, can't I? For the sake of my safety.

“There’s no such thing as a seatbelt. This is a classic car. Oh, but don’t worry about staining it. My car getting bloodstained is the usual.”

I am not that much of a good girl to worry about making your car dirty with the bleeding resulting from being run over and trampled, however, on the other hand, I was relieved to know that this car was an antique from when the seatbelt wasn’t popularized yet.

It’s not because the copyright thing doesn’t matter, then. Even if I call it classic, it’s not that old. Is not Beethoven.

It’s not it, the thing is, I was relieved because the cars from the good old times weren’t loaded with computers… It goes without saying about the autonomous driving that’s still in development nowadays, but there’s also not even a navigation system in it. So no matter how much of a monster car it is, this old-style vehicle isn’t counted as what our family classifies as a “machine”.

Good. I didn’t break Mom’s instruction.

Mom’s absolute law.

Don’t touch machines.

If I can go on without breaking Mom’s teaching, then not having a seatbelt is no problem at all. It’s okay, isn’t it? Classic cars. It may be bad for the environment, but is good for my mind. Please keep burning all that gas.

“Errr… What was it?”

“That’s not good at all, Jun-chan. Haven’t Ii-tan and Kunagisa-chin taught you manners, huh? The manners towards me, I say. When you first see someone, you say “Nice to meet you”, don’t you?”

To be preached about manners from the person that ran you with a car right the first time they saw you… I see, that’s life, isn’t it? With this first semester in the dormitory life, I had completely become a peace-idiot. Really, the world outside school is filled with injustice to the brim.

Ii-tan. Kunagisa-chin.

Hearing my parents being called by their nicknames, that’s somewhat uncomfortable, or rather, embarrassing, maybe…… To know a side of your parents that’s not about them being your parents ends up giving me the impression of seeing something that I shouldn’t have seen.

Anyway, I wasn’t taught about things like manners from those two. Leave alone the “Nice to meet you”, even having learned “Good morning” is dubious, so, just like I’ve been mentioning here, what I was taught was nonsense and the absolute law only.

Dad’s Nonsense Series - No. 54.

Good exceptions make good neighbors.

Even putting aside all those various circumstances, in my case, I don't really get the feeling of having met her for the first time here. I've heard a lot about her heroic tales from my parents, like it was their own bragging, and was also told from their friends so many episodes they treasured to a point that one could become fed up with it. To say even more, I've also heard grudges from the staff at Sumiyuri School — where I am enrolled and living in — a dog of times[16].

Er, I mean, a lot of times.

Why do the staff at Sumiyuri School say those grudges towards me you may ask, well, a long time ago, when Aunt Jun was older sister Jun, she pretty much destroyed everything it seems. If you dig the details of those old legends, you too would be wanting to hold some grudges against me, that inherited her name. It really is an unreasonable combination of fate but, the legends are even more unreasonable.

So, by listening to all that patched information from various places along these fifteen years, I didn't really have the impression of never having met the "Aikawa Jun - Humanity's Strongest Contractor", which is the source for my name.

Seriously, I'm not calling her aunt out of a joke, she really gives me the impression of a weird relative that you'd hear in rumors. Is not because it feels like calling her Aunt May, is more like a real niece and aunt[17].

And now, when I did meet her, it's an impression that even surpasses the impression I've had from those rumors.

When someone says she hits people like a piano, I would take it lightly and think of it as a soft bumping, like a pianissimo. "Jeez, saying those exaggerated things…". I thought she would be taking people down safely, like with the guidance of an instructor.

I was completely wrong.

If I had to say, it was a shock like a bumper with spikes on it. "Was I hit by a sonic boom?" I would question myself. Being alive now is just such a mystery.

"Strictly speaking, your heart stopped once, but I restarted you with a massage. Be grateful to the person that saved your life forever, okay? Jun-chan. Your life from now on is like a gift from me."

"Is that so? Thank you very much, I'll feel indebted to you for the rest of my life. I'll define Auntie Jun as the recipient of my death insurance, ok?—No way you're really expecting me to think that, right?"

I'm not sure if I have life insurance, but if Mom or Dad did place an

insurance on me, the insurance company would pay it beforehand with how dizzy I feel right now, but, even then, I played the straight man here in that way.

I got punched.

Eh…

“Don’t go making flippant remarks. Who do you think I am?”

“You are Auntie Jun, aren’t you?”

“Yeah, being called like that really just doesn’t feel right.”

Well, it must be awkward to suddenly be called an aunt by a 15-year-old little girl you’ve never met before. Even if it’s not enough to be run over by a car, though.

“No, not at all. I think of all humanity as my family, so it’s not about it.”

“That’s some amazing love for humanity.”

“I think if it’s family I can do anything with them.”

“Terrifying… This one-sided family feeling, it’s really terrifying.”

“Is not about it. It’s about being called ‘Jun’ by Jun-chan. I mean, both of my mothers were also named Jun. It’s creating a ‘Jun’ congestion.”

While breaking all traffic laws except drunken driving and road rage (even if this first-person novel gets a movie adaptation, it’s better not to expect it to get any sponsorship from the car company), she said that. Oh my, I’ve never heard about this episode, did I? Are Aunt Jun’s parents both called Jun too?

“No, that’s wrong. Both of my mothers were named Jun. As in Jun in the Japanese word for ‘sequential order’, and Jun in the word for ‘to conform to’.”

“Oh, I get it. That’s what it is, right.”

I didn’t get it at all, but I agreed with it. I was raised surrounded by dangerous adults since very young, so I was proficient at this kind of worldly wisdom.

Or that was what I thought. This sly guide to conversations didn’t work with Humanity’s Strongest Contractor.

I got punched again.

This person really punches people like it’s nothing, huh?

And it wasn’t something like a weak jab, it was a full-on one. It’s not a person supposed to exist in the *Reiwa* era. Feels like a character setting from the times of the Japanese economic miracle.

“All families have their own circumstances. The happy families all kinda look alike, but the worst one is just the worst, you know?”

For what Tolstoi said, the latter half is completely different. But, however, it’s not especially because the names’ readings are the same, but this is the first time it felt that I understood a bit of what this defiant person is saying. All families have their own circumstances.

That’s quite right.

Parents are particularly troublesome. Now, my chest feels full of the desire of wanting to ask them why they used this dangerous person’s name for their daughter. Actually, my lungs are what may be filled now, with all the blood that came from my damaged organs. This is the extent which is hard to breathe right now.

“That’s why it’s so weird this thing about ‘Jun’ going over three generations. Good grief, that Nonsense User. How dare he. However, when I think of it as when Son Goku, who seemed to be so disconnected from human-like feelings, named his son after his raising grandpa’s name, I can’t bring myself to be that mad about it.”

I think you’re really angry right now.

That reminds me, there was this scene where, to think that, from anybody, that Piccolo would get angry about how Goku raised his son… I don’t think Goku was disconnected from human-like feelings, but when it comes to family, it’s also true that that guy was a quite dangerous person.

Dad and Mom too, when it comes to being family, they were Martians[18].

No, Sayajins, right?

Hmm… My thoughts are falling apart again, aren’t they? Since I was very young, I’ve received information about Aunt Jun liking manga — but now is not the time to get excited about Dragon Ball, which ended up becoming the textbook for all humanity.

“Er, Aunt Jun. To what hospital is this car going?”

“To what beauty parlor[19] this car is going to, you ask? You really are at that age huh, Jun-chan. Caring about your hair and makeup even when you’re almost dying.”

I do care about my hair and makeup. This is since I was born.

Also, eye makeup too.

However, having my visual field being painted red, this comes seconds or thirds even. There is nothing more important than life.

“Hospital was what I said, hospital. H-o-s-p-i-t-a-l[20].”

“To want more from this car overflowed with hospitality, you were really raised spoiled, huh. I’m not going to the hospital.”

“Wait, what.”

You’re saying that this car, so red, with a driver, and a girl in a high school uniform too so red, you’re saying this bright red car that wouldn’t even need to spin the red lights is not fulfilling the role of an ambulance?

So then, by what reason was I placed in this car?

“You’re not aware are you, Jun-chan. Aware that you’ve been kidnapped and are going to be killed.”

“K-killed?”

“Oh no, being killed was an overstatement.”

Said Aunt Jun cynically.

So this is the famous devil’s laughter.

“Aware that you might be killed, that is.”

“That wasn’t much of an overstatement, then.”

No, well, even if me being killed was in fact an overstatement — Ki-ki-ki-ki-ki—kidnapping, she says? I tried a bit to say it in an overly inarticulate way, but, what? This person, did she hit me so she could kidnap me? For the whole world to see?

“W-why would Aunt Jun kidnap me? After ignoring me for all these long fifteen years?”

I was so confused that it almost sounded like a line towards a real parent I was lifelong separated from, but that really was my honest feeling.

To be honest, it came to a point that I’d even suspected it being an imaginary lifesaver from Dad and Mom’s minds. From what it seems like, in contrast to Dad’s work range which was mainly the Kinki region (let’s save the discussion about whether the Mie and Fukui prefectures are in the Kinki region for later), Aunt Jun’s circumstances as a contractor after a certain period made her active in the whole Earth, and also even moving the stage to space it seems (maybe it was a relationship like of Mitarai Kiyoshi and Ishioka Kazumi I wonder), but even then, it wouldn’t take much effort to just come look the face of the child that inherited her name, would it?

“That’s why I came to see you, didn’t I? Stop complaining or I’ll kill you, got it?”

Even in the *Showa* era there weren’t any characters like this, I think. This is a person from the age when all Japanese would carry a katana, isn’t she?

“If I wasn’t the type of girl that was told ‘I’ll kill you’ even by her mom, I’d be hurt right now, you know? This thing you said now.”

“A girl like that is all wounds from the beginning, isn’t she?”

As she raised her voice and laughed, it seems my self-deprecating joke suited her sensor of humor. You can laugh it all that you want, but please look ahead. It would be too tragic if my joke caused an accident or something like that.

“In the first place, even now, my whole body is fully wounded, about a thousand wounds I’d say. Is it alright? I’m not looking like Buffaloman right now, am I?”

When I realized (although it may be just natural with all this speed), we’d left the central part of Kyoto before I noticed. The bright red supercar now was running through what a pure Kyoto citizen would maybe describe as “that neighborhood is in Nara-prefecture” now. My house that I planned to come home to, now was far behind us.

“Something such as fifteen years is basically last year, isn’t it?”

“It may end up as my death year[21], this year now.”

“Sloppy much? These Reiwa era youngsters. To think that Ii-tan would almost die every time we’d met.”

“Not only me, but you’d also almost kill Dad too? And many times?”

And even then, being respected by him so much… Is Aunt Jun that weird or is my Dad, I wonder.

Probably both.

“For me also, when I knew I had parents, I was already around 10 years old. Before that, I didn’t even know that adults existed. Ah, before that I would bring vagrant children with a similar upbringing to living in the sewer though, just so you know.”

“You’re surpassing my self-deprecating joke in seconds, aren’t you.”

Is “vagrant children” something even okay to say in the *Reiwa* era? Maybe if she herself is the one saying it, then it’s okay, I wonder.

“I get it, Aunt Jun. I should be happy with an out of bounds being like you just coming to see me, right?”

“It’s okay if you get it. It’s okay if you kneel.”

Sarcasm doesn’t go through her, it seems.

She’s just too thick-skinned.

I've come to think that my head being all dizzy is not just about the accident.

"Although, the sense of time of a person so out of scale like you is not an answer to why you are kidnapping me, right?"

"I've dealt basically with all invaders from space now, so I have free time again. 'Aah, there's nothing exciting happening recently in my life', so I thought I'd go spin the rerun gacha around here, I guess."

Who are you calling rerun gacha?

This person, with the feeling of someone participating in a gacha game's new event, did she come to this far Kyoto just to knock down a child with her car and kidnap her? No matter how much of a worldwide tourism spot Kyoto is, this person is getting banned from here, isn't she?

In a society like this, where the character setting of not having a smartphone is just an annoyance, this me here who can't even touch a smartphone in order to obey her mother's instruction can't bring herself to not get angry.

"I think that not asking a woman her age being out of manners is just an old value, so as a modern society person in its peak, if you allow me, Aunt Jun, you're around 50 years old, aren't you?"

"Those are the years when women shine the most and you are saying this. It's called womanhood prime, Jun-chan. Besides, my crap father in his 50s, he would be gathering all those 13 oddballs and strive to end the world, just so you know."

So you have two mothers and a crap father. Really, you're surpassing my family environment in a matter of seconds.

"Compared to that, something like child abduction sounds even cute."

"I would rather say that it describes perfectly the "like father like daughter" saying if I may point that out."

Punched.

Does this culture of punching comedy duos even exist anymore? Did I cross the prefecture border and, before I realized, we entered Osaka's area[22] ,I wonder?

"Normally, what I wanted would be hitting everyone vigorously in the sidewalk like Dio-sama, but, indeed, that's a bit questionable, I thought, so I aimed for when you were alone at the crosswalk, just like passing through a needle's eye. I've really mellowed, haven't I?"

"Aunt Jun also calls Dio-sama as Dio-sama, huh. Wait, that's not it."

“However, I do have quite a few thoughts about it, you know. No way I’m becoming like that ridiculous parent, I swore to myself back then. But even then, when you do become an adult and get to see what it is, you start looking like that crap father and double mothers so much that you get fed up with it.”

“I don’t think you’ve become an adult, you know?”

“What is it? Aren’t you taking a philosophic look at it, you brat? You’re saying that as long as you’re rebelling against your parents, you’re still not an adult?”

“No, I would say that as long as you’re kidnapping a child while thinking of it as a gacha game, as if you’re half-joking about it…”

Thinking about the amount of blood I’ve lost, she’s about to get an accidental homicide crime charge… No wait, if she knocked me down on purpose, it is a vehicular manslaughter crime?

However, the application of law for this was hard, if I recall it right. It’s also a question if there are any laws that apply to Aikawa Jun.

Dad’s Nonsense Series - No. 13.

The equality below laws is unrelated to individuals above the clouds.

“What rude of you saying I’m half-kidding about this.”

“So, you’re fully kidding then?”

“You do say clever things, huh. As you’d expect from Nonsense User’s daughter. You look quite like the Blue Savant, though. Except for the color of your eyes and your hair.”

“…”

“But well, you’re named with my name so, it’s like you’re my kid, isn’t it? Let’s conquer the world as a parent and child power-pair. By gathering twelve more guys like you, we’ll make a New Thirteen Steps, and then, we’ll end the world in place of my crap father, doesn’t sound bad. I’ve also become someone that can know what filial piety is.”

It was an invitation, a kidnapping rather, that turned upside-down a lot of things like parental rights, ownership rights, and even the concept of filial piety, and it scared me to the bottom of my heart. However, Aunt Jun continued and said “that was a joke.”

Are you kidding[23]*?*

“The truth is that it’s fully business, actually. That’s right, I, the Human’s Strongest Contractor, only take action when it’s a job.”

What? You kidnapped me as part of a job?

Isn't this just a plain right criminal?

A Kidnap Contractor?

"D-did someone place a request to kidnap me? Saying to wait for me to leave the tight security of Sumiyuri School and hit me with a car while I'm coming back home?"

"Hitting you with the car was my suggestion."

Makes sense.

In this context, I could go on about the differences between kidnapping, abduction and taking captive, but I'm not someone who likes faultfinding around words. Strictly speaking, "hitting someone with a car" and "running someone over with a car" also have different meanings but, more importantly, there's something I must ask.

"Who requested it? Kidnapping me."

To be fair, there's too many candidates.

Because, at any rate, I'm the Blue Savant and Nonsense User's daughter. It's actually even odd that in these fifteen years of life there weren't any kidnappings. If I was kidnapped twice a day it would actually still feel lacking.

When I think about the multiple wrongdoings Dad and Mom worked on in their teens… Although, you could also say that it's precisely because I'm the daughter of the Blue Savant and the Nonsense User that I survived that far.

An untouchable you can't interfere with.

However, there's people whom the tacit understanding about this untouchable here just can't be applied to. Or rather, there is only one person.

The person who's the reason behind my name.

That's Aikawa Jun.

That's why this sequence of events about Aunt Jun taking my kidnapping request is brimming with reality, just like me being run over by her without meaning was real too.

Hence, what I should ask for is not who took the request, but who requested it.

That is to say, the number of people that could request a job from Aunt Jun at this point is extremely limited. This is also something I've heard from Dad, but it seems that, about when I was born fifteen years ago, people all around the world made an agreement to forbid requests to Humanity's

Strongest Contractor, in order to preserve society's orders and systems. In the end, however, even this agreement was smashed to atoms by Aunt Jun, but these remainders at least should still exist to this day.

Just the act itself of requesting something from Aikawa Jun is a global level of risk… Even if Dad and Mom have some grudges against them here and there, to mobilize Aikawa Jun to kidnap their daughter, is just too low of a cost performance.

Just like a classic car's engine. Not that I am saying that classic cars are bad, you know? It's just that, for a body wounded here and there from a traffic accident, it's too much of a hard drive.

To sum it up, to request a new event, I mean, a kidnapping to Aunt Jun, it can be imagined it must be even more of a big shot.

I cannot avoid straining myself.

Well, it may not matter for me, since I will die from blood loss in about five minutes from now, but desire to solve a puzzle if there's one might be Mom's genes, I wonder.

It seems that Mom was an armchair detective, or rather, a gaming chair detective, that would look for answers through hacking, but her daughter, who is forbidden from using machines, can only sincerely ask.

"Rather than who, it's an organization. Rather than big-shot it's a big company."

"Organization? Big Company?"

"Have you heard about the Kunagisa Syndicate?"

4

Yes, yes, Kunagisa Syndicate, right. I know it, I know it, I probably heard of it on the internet or something sometime, don't know much about it, though.

That's what I wanted to use as an excuse, but unfortunately life isn't that easy, or rather, Kunagisa Syndicate is not that kind. If you live somewhat in west Japan, being free from Kunagisa Syndicate's influence is just not possible.

Much more if your surname is Kunagisa, that is.

This surname I've taken as if to crown the name inherited from Aunt Jun made me bullied to no end in elementary school. Now I think it's cool but, seriously, there was also a period when saying my name in front of others was just a pain from the bottom of my heart.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 1.

First, introduce yourself. No matter who you're talking to.
Then, make them introduce themselves. No matter who they are.

I don't quite remember it that well, but to think of it, Dad's Nonsense Series stemmed from something like this maybe… However, when it comes to the "don't know much about it" part, it's not an excuse, actually.

There's no one who grasps the Kunagisa Syndicate fully. Probably this goes even for the ones inside it. Calling it an organization also, or big company too, frankly speaking it's also not true from what, it feels.

If I had to say, it would be better to call it the ruling classes.

That's why, if the classmates that dabbled with my surname actually traced back my family tree and reached the Kunagisa household, they sure wouldn't do such a risky thing. They sure wouldn't regard me as the "Syndicate Head" and have the idea of playing the "Kunagisa Syndicate Game". Well, I also feigned the surname being just a coincidence to get through elementary school, but, as expected, I couldn't fake it at middle school anymore.

The fact that I switched gears and put a lot of effort into going to Sumiyuri School for High School was in part to quickly get out of my parents' house, but this earnest reality is also part of it… If it's the Sumiyuri School, which has The Four Gods and One Mirror in its background, it would make somewhat of a resistance to Kunagisa Syndicate, and it would be able to maintain balance with it (although, when I did enroll in it, I got to be grudged by them because of my name being Jun, so this Dad's Nonsense Series - No.1 really is utterly sinful).

Kunagisa Tomo.

My Mom has her origins in the Kunagisa Syndicate.

I don't know much about this either. I may be called as a cold child that's too apathetic towards her mother, but, normally, you don't want to hear stories about your parents quarries with their families, right? What I can say is, the teenage Mom went off the rails as much as she could, and then she got isolated by her family, a.k.a. The Kunagisa Syndicate.

She came back and worked for them for a while, but that also was for just a brief period of time, as Dad and Mom got married and then they broke-off relations with her again.

"Hahaha, right, right. That's why I call Kunagisa-chin as "rather than an insulator, an isolated daughter"[24]."

"Were you really friends? With Mom I mean."

"She was my trusted friend."

“It’s not like you’re Anne of Green Gables.”

Aunt Jun does have red hair, though[25].

Am I a redhead now too? With the color from my blood.

“Now that I think of it, I came to know that there is this sequence to Anne of Green Gables called ‘Rilla of Ingleside’, so I’ve read the Avonlea Series in its order ‘cause I wanted to read that. I don’t really read novels that much, so it really took some time, but when I got to the last volume, something was weird. Then, I asked Kunagisa-chin to look it up and she said that ‘Rilla of Ingleside’ is only counted as part of the Avonlea Series in Japan.”

“Hahaha.”

I feigned laughing.

As Kunagisa’s Daughter, As Jun.

Making the title of this spin-off work as “The Daughter of Anne, Rilla” in Japan is really misleading, but if you say that, it turns into a discussion that could also deny that adapting “Anne of Green Gables” as “Redhead Anne” was such a great idea, so it’s a hard question.

“Green Gables, huh. So, Kunagisa-chin is the Blue New Wife[26] then?”

“She’s not a new wife at all anymore. She’s a good old wife now.”

“Is Ii-tan a good old badger then?”

“It’s seriously this, though. Well, actually, I haven’t met them for some months now, so I don’t quite know how those parents are right now.”

I didn’t say “well I couldn’t go back home to see them because you kidnapped me”. If I was punched any further, I would really get wounded all over to a life-risking point.

“Jun-chan may not have come back for a few months, but for Kunagisa-chin, it has been more than twenty years that she hasn’t gone back home.”

Aunt Jun said.

While letting her both hands off the handle and hair-doing her red hair that fluttered in the wind. Just this once, this conversation’s content was even more dangerous than the risk of her reckless driving.

“Adding the period in her teens when she also left her home, in her whole life, the time she spent at the Kunagisa Syndicate is shorter than outside of it. And the same for being part of the Kunagisa main family as well.”

“Yeah. I’ve kinda sensed that… The time in her teens also was kinda of an elopement with Dad too, wasn’t it?”

“Not at all, but exactly.”

Which one?

No, I don’t want to dig further. The “my parents’ small love story” really isn’t something I want to know. Please keep it sealed for all eternity.

“For both my father and mother, they had their circumstances. As their daughter, I want to respect their privacy.”

“Don’t be getting all formal so suddenly. I’ll kill you.”

“Is your world view one that saying things formally makes you get killed? Roger that[27].”

Getting formal, or rather, behaving as pretending to be clever, is what one could say, but for someone clever[28], I’m not seeing the point of this conversation yet. It’s precisely because I don’t want to see that, conversely, I played dumb instead, maybe… Why would Mom’s family, which disowned her, request Humanity’s Strongest Contractor to kidnap me?

If they wanted to bring Mom back, after she left her home pretty much as an elopement, it would be more understandable at least.

“Someone like me is the devil’s children born from that Dad who they hate so much, isn’t it?”

“Sure, the low self-esteem was inherited by your dad huh. But for those grandpa and grandma, even that devil’s child is their adorable granddaughter, you know.”

Hm…

It started getting suspicious didn’t it. I don’t know what “kina”[29] is, but its smell really is flowing in the air. Grandpa and Grandma… And also, Mom had an older brother too if I recall it correctly.

The current head of Kunagisa Syndicate. Kunagisa Nao.

I’ve never met them. And probably won’t.

I drop by Dad’s home sometimes, but just like Mom, I have no relation with them as well… I’ve never doubted that.

I instinctively feel danger from them, even.

This sense of danger, this bad hunch, to put it lightly even, is it really about to become real? And of all people, with the contractor behind the reason for my name as a mediator…

Without a care Aunt Jun said:

“Well, if your grandpa and grandma say they want to take a look at their grandchild’s face, as a warmhearted person, I wouldn’t be reluctant to help them, you know. After all is said and done, it’s ‘cause I do think family is family.”

No, you sure don’t think this.

To have the nerve to stick her nose into this family quarrel that’s even thicker than blood… Doesn’t this contractor know why the police claim nonintervention in civil affairs?

“If it’s love-hate dramas of your liking, please go read The Village of Eight Graves instead. Or maybe The Inugami Family.”

“I told you, right? I don’t read novels that much. They’re reaally just text, aren’t they?”

My goodness. To think that the illiteracy question that has been talked about for a long time would have an impact on my life in a way like that… While I was here, gazing at fire on the opposite shore, what a fire-spread it has become.

The sparks are coming with the wind.

As I have this restriction about not touching machines, my pastimes are mostly books and theaters, but even for me, I like manga more than books. I’ve read both The Village of Eight Graves and The Inugami Family in manga before the actual books.

Because of that, what an unthinkable situation it has become.

Because of literacy’s decline.

Well, no, not because of illiteracy, maybe this is a problem about lack of proper parents and child relationships. I don’t know what type of person they are, but from the point they requested a contractor with the reason of seeing their grandchild’s face, I can’t expect a decent unfolding from now on. Even if hitting me with a car and then abducting me was Aunt Jun’s original idea.

“S-so, this car, it isn’t going to Kunagisa Household from all places, is it?”

“For a matter of reputation, they are not letting the child of their disinherited daughter into their main stronghold, it seems. So, that’s why they settled to meet you in a detached building as a neutral area.”

“Detached… What do you mean about that?”

“A World Heritage in Hyougo-prefecture.”

Alias, The Kunagisa Castle, that’s what it’s also called.

And by saying that, Aunt Jun stepped even stronger into the gas

accelerator pedal. Not an autonomous step, but one filled with intention.

千賀雪洞
CHIGA BOMBORI
Apprentice Maid.

0

Become an irreplaceable substitute.

(Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 91)

1

Kunagisa Castle.

I was born and raised in Kyoto (it would be exciting to argue with folks that want to push their favorite hypothetical places and say that the outskirts where Sumiyuri School is located at are not part of Kyoto, but, and talking about being out, this would be too much outside of the main theme here, so I'll let it to the next opportunity), so even if Hyougo-prefecture is our neighbor, I'm not acquainted with its geography at all, but even then, I grasped the common knowledge about that fortress classified as a World Heritage. It's nothing to boast about since it's just normal in this era with the internet at its peak one may say, but, because I follow my Spartan Mom's teachings, I don't even get to watch the TV properly, so the information about distant places is not that easy to obtain.

Mom's Absolute Law

Don't touch machines.

By the way, with this absolute law and Dad's Nonsense Series No. 1, their daughter just doesn't have the ways to stray from the right path. Maybe it could be the best approach to not letting your child do evil things. In short, in this era where personal information is the most valuable asset, it makes it impossible to do things anonymously, and breaking the laws without touching machines is quite hard too… As long as I don't ride a classic car.

Although this talk got a bit off-track, what I wanted to say is that, if this not worldly-wise, or rather, ignorant child, even, that I am has known about what UNESCO defines as one of the World Heritages through things like textbooks and photobooks, and also that it's one of the twelve castles still having a castle tower[31] and that it also is the Kunagisa Castle, you could say that this alone shows how majestic this castle is.

For a hometown-lover like me, what I would want to do is raise my voice and claim that Kyoto has the Nijou Castle too, but, from what it seems, that place doesn't have the castle tower anymore, or rather, the castle is already lost. "Grr. There's just no Nijou Castle anymore is there?" as I have no choice but to lower my voice… I wonder if they wouldn't rebuild it. Perhaps it would get caught on the Landscape Regulations, that is the reason behind Kyoto

Tower being a “manufactured article” rather than a “building”. I wonder. But it just doesn’t feel right somehow… To think of it, there’s just too many castle towers that were lost to fires. Maybe that’s precisely why the remaining existing castles are such a highly valued legacy worthy of requiring all caution possible.

And that’s why.

No matter what, this building shouldn’t be someone’s possession, much rather be chosen as a place for a happy family meeting… And more than that, it being a hideout to take someone captive should just be out of question. What is it, the Sengoku period?

“Here we go, we’ve arrived. Have I broken a new World Record again?”

While saying such cheerful things, Aunt Jun kinda drifted in the Kunagisa Castle’s outer moat, spinning as a teacup in an amusement park, and then accomplishing a parallel parking.

Is not the most elegant metaphor to say, but for someone that just went through an accident like me, this last spinning part was nearly the finishing blow that almost surely would make me vomit my brain. For me, who can’t even ride the jet coaster due to not having enough height, riding an attraction like that without a seatbelt made me think if I wouldn’t be sent flying like a human cannon… And when I think of the events about to happen later soon, it feels like actually being sent flying would have been a better option, maybe.

That’s because the place to where I am going now after crossing the Castle’s Gate is not the teacup, the jet coaster or even the free fall, it’s a haunted house where all types of evil go rampant.

“Ahaha. If you say that, the ghost in the haunted house would be you, Jun-chan, being so covered in blood.”

“Who do you think is to blame for me being covered in blood like this?”

“No clue. Whose fault is it? When the culprit’s identity becomes clear, just tell me, Aunt Jun will take revenge for you.”

As if she really didn’t know whose fault it was, Aunt Jun showed me her clenched fist. I feel the resolution from someone that would deal with every situation with a single clenched fist… At the same time, she pushed any absurdity through a single fist, for half a century.

Really, I am just exactly what one would call as not living up to her name.

How dare Dad and Mom think of naming their own daughter with the name of a person like that… Isn’t that what one would call an over-doting parent? No matter how your daughter is raised, she won’t become like that, you know? And on top of that, being kidnapped by this very same person.

Nevertheless, I am Kunagisa Jun. A proud shield.

Doesn't matter if I'm being kidnapped or almost dying, if I've come this far, I'd better make up my mind. From the start, if it comes to Kunagisa Syndicate wanting to invite someone into their grounds, not only me, but anyone, then there's just no one with the right to refuse it.

No one except Mom.

"Hey, drop off the car, Jun-chan. Let's have a commemorative photograph with auntie. Ama~azing huh, this castle tower that can be seen even from outside the gate, or rather, from anywhere in this city. It can easily compete with those castles around Germany and France. Was it repaired recently? The administration seems good too."

"That's so, isn't it… It really gives that castle town impression by its literal name huh, this place."

My field trip in middle school got suspended due to the pandemic, so being out of Kyoto prefecture and doing sightseeing like this really feels like the first time. Was the closest to it that time when I put up all my courage and went to Osaka to do some shopping? Or maybe that time at elementary school when we had an excursion to Nara's large Buddha Statue? The thing is, for me, someone who didn't travel all over the world like Aunt Jun, I didn't have any comparison metrics in my mind… But looking at this castle so white that it almost seems as it reflects all the light it receives, for an instant, it felt like I would end up having a memory lapse about the fact that I was severely injured and about to die, and also about the fact that I'm in the middle of being kidnapped by Mom's household, which is pretty much close to being a secret organization.

I'll pass on the commemorative photograph, though.

It'll look like the traffic accidents on-site photos.

"Are you alright? Jun-chan. Should I lend you a shoulder?"

"How kind of you, but I pass. I can walk on my own."

Fortunately, from what it seems, my legs are unhurt. Or maybe it feels like it would be closer to reality describing it as every visible place in my body being shredded, except for my legs, but anyway, it is not to the point I can't walk.

"Mwahaha. It's almost like the Sen Hime Festival, isn't it Jun-chan? I will perform the outrider role to the utmost at least."

"Wrong, you're performing a kidnapping, you know?"

Just thinking about crossing the bridge placed in the outer moat and walking to the inner citadel annoys me a lot, but from what I recall, this Kunagisa Castle had received an optical effect, so the castle tower looked more distant to what it really is.

It's a perspective trick planned to lower the enemy nation troop's morale, so in reality, it's surprisingly close.

Close enough to an injured person to be able to reach it… Aunt Jun seems to have left her car with the keys on, but worrying about illegal parking after all this is just useless. Instead, although it really isn't the festival, one could maybe say that not entering the castle with her car was her way of using good sense at least.

The bridal procession festival…

Would it be like Kunagisa Jun's noblewoman visitation?

I have no clue on what Mom's family is planning…. But it's definitely nothing like wanting to see their granddaughter's face or like planning to reconcile with their daughter.

"Are Grandpa and Grandma in that castle already?"

While crossing the first castle gate, I nervously asked that.

"Who knows. There's no use asking me that."

"It's not like there's anyone else I should ask if I don't ask you."

"I don't know that much about that Kunagisa Syndicate too, you know? That place, differently from The Four Gods and One Mirror, it's simply not like conglomerates or prestige families, and it's also not like the research teams at ER3 too. And it's different than the 'Killing Names' too."

" ? What was this 'Killing Names' thing?"

"Has your dad not introduced you to his close friend Zerozaki-kun yet? That's impressive."

"Zerozaki…? This really is the first time I hear this name, but, aah, now that you say, I think that the previous job of my babysitter was some weird thing like 'Killing Names' or was it 'Cursing Names', maybe."

"This era when 'Killing Names' and 'Cursing Names' are being settled as 'some weird thing like' really feels like diversity, doesn't it? Well, your grandpa and grandma are not on active duty anymore if I had to say, so maybe they're already there, I imagine? I mean, when Kunagisa-chin's older brother caused a coup d'état, those two were probably forced to retire."

"Isn't a family trouble happening from this point already?"

The daughter eloped, the son caused a coup d'état… When it comes to this point, would it be that the strongest motivation behind this kidnap incident is revenge by wanting to erase the granddaughter?

If that's so, you can even say that it's kinda almost completed at this

point… It feels like I will end up dirtying this pure white World Heritage with blood, so I'm kinda terrified.

Or rather, isn't this citadel actually distant?

Then there's no reason for the trick then… No, if my mind, and my legs especially, are about to give up, then the knowledge from the old times is still effective nowadays.

It doesn't need CG.

And even then, I wouldn't be able to touch it. In double meaning.

"Now, now. Perhaps it's an exhilarating story where they are willing to make you the new Kunagisa Syndicate Head, you know?"

"'Exhilarating' you say, this isn't said that much recently, is it?"

"Should I say uni-uni[32] then?"

Aunt Jun says this puzzling thing and then:

"Kunagisa-chin's brother, Kunagisa Nao, has been the head of the Syndicate long since the coup d'état. Maybe he's already dreaming of his semi-retirement. Hence, it wouldn't be much of a surprise if it's your turn now."

Sayings that arouses ambitions in my heart.

Well, it's not an ambition for me, actually. If I say it in Dad's style, I'm not even sure if I have a heart. I've never even imagined dealing with the Kunagisa Syndicate… If anything, it's to the point where, even if I'm not the type that would move to Tokyo, I'd thought about getting a job in the future in Japan's east, where Kunagisa Syndicate's influence is comparatively low. Japan's east or maybe in America.

I just can't escape from blood relatives, can I?

My blood is still escaping from me, though.

"Aren't you interested? In all that wealth and treasures in it."

"Do you think I look like someone that would be? Something like money is just like those rally stamps you get from radio calisthenics."

"Talk about what someone from the wealthy classes would say. This much wealth is not something you can just easily get, like a gacha login bonus campaign, you know?"

Oh right, excuse me for that.

Right when you're enjoying the new event, and me here not knowing much about gacha games, I'm so sorry. Please forgive me for not being into

gacha that much.

Well, it's not like my parents are rich, but it's not like we're starving too… Especially Mom, she seems like she was raised like a noble, at least that's what her daughter here thinks.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 55.

Even if your livings don't have leeway,
You must have leeway in the way you live.

Leeway, or rather, postponement.

Sentence postponement.

It feels like walking to the gallows. I know I shouldn't say it, but in this Hyougo-prefecture nearing Okayama-prefecture it already gives me "The Village of Eight Graves" vibes.

While at that, with the uphill drawing a curve, we could see then the second gate. I even thought for a moment "are we climbing Mount Fuji?", but when I started thinking with my hazy head, "oh could you look at that, it seems like it's a castle". Well, even if it's below 50 meters above sea level, it's still a castle placed on a mountain, according to the guidebook at least.

It's known that the World Heritage Castle Kunagisa receives foreign tourists too, but maybe because it's a day off, or maybe because an evil secret organization rented it for its private use, from what I've seen this far, there's no tourists, volunteers or even guides. As a castle capitulated without shredding any blood… Well, it's not a good metaphor for me to use while being covered in blood.

And also, a gatekeeper appeared.

It's not like there's no one here… However, she wasn't a guard wearing armor and carrying a lance. I called gatekeeper because I was immersed in Kunagisa Castle's dignified atmosphere, but, if I say it in the most honest way, without being unfair to mystery novels, describing her in a way which eliminates all my personal impressions, that one waiting for us there was would be generally called as a maid.

A maid-san.

And this maid, and in the strict meaning of maid, was a maiden wearing an apron-dress. This is the appearance that would suit an European's fortress, giving such an unbalanced feeling, since it was by no means the looks of someone serving as the gatekeeper in Japan's Sengoku era.

Has she come here to welcome us, maybe?

I thought that with my consciousness about to fade. Walking straight to it,

was I walking not to the gallows, but a stairway to paradise instead…? But even then, imagining a maid in my near-death hallucination, I myself must acknowledge it as reading too much manga, I guess.

Or maybe, perhaps it's the remains of a cosplay that Mom did for Dad that are lurking in their daughters' mind. No, seriously, having witnessed that scene was my infant trauma. I ended up remembering something rather unpleasant right before dying.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No.4

Hire a maid inside your heart.

Actually, this is nonsense in fact, Dad. Are you really using one of the earliest numbers in the series to tell that?

Really, I'm serious about this.

Even the babysitter that had such an impact in my personality's construction didn't wear a maid's outfit, so it really is a culture shock. It may even be an electric shock, it makes me shudder.

Fortunately, the maid that appeared wasn't an illusion due to a perspective trick, she really was there.

It wasn't just that she was here to welcome us, but rather that she came all the way here to do it.

"Welcome back, Kunagisa Jun-sama. And Aikawa Jun-sama, too."

She respectfully bowed and greeted us. While being the same age as me or even younger for what I can see, her manners were so fascinatingly polite. So, I wasn't really having any hallucinations at all. To be honest, I was still wondering if I wasn't dying in the crosswalk at Shijougawara city, even now.

Even if it weren't a Japanese-style Castle here, being a teenage maid itself was already unrealistic, and it also violates the Labor Standards Act and the Child Welfare Act… Well, this isn't what someone who came here after being shaken in a supercar that violated the Road Traffic Law that much should say, though.

"Yeah."

Aunt Jun said while raising her hand in a rather cool fashion. It's a king's behavior of being used to being served by people. It didn't seem like she faltered from the maid's "welcome back" at all.

"It's you who came here, huh. Is your mother fine? On that island."

"Yes. She earnestly instructed me to not do any discourtesy towards you, Jun-sama."

This maid that looked like being acquainted with Aunt Jun from long ago said that and turned in my direction.

“Nice to meet you, Kunagisa Jun-sama. My name is Chiga Bonbori, I am the one that will be taking care of you in this castle. I look forward to getting to know you.”

“Ah, right. I’m Kunagisa Jun. I’m a proud shield.”

Dad’s Nonsense Series - No. 1.

First, introduce yourself. No matter who you’re talking to.
Then, make them introduce themselves. No matter who they are.

However, “Chiga”? Oh, it’s “Chiga”[33]… I thought she was referring to the blood covering my whole body… But “Bonbori”?

“Yes, not ‘dimly’ like in ‘bonyari’, but the paper-covered lamp famous in Hinamatsuri called ‘bonbori’.”

“Ah…”

It’s a quirky name, but it’s the era of diversity. If there’s a teenage maid, there could also be a maid named Bonbori.

Besides, my eyes went first to her fashion, like the apron and the hair ornament, but she was carrying a first-aid kit with her hands in front of her legs.

It seems she wasn’t referring to my bleeding when she introduced herself with “Chiga”, but from what it seems it was already expected that when I arrived at Kunagisa Castle I would be seriously injured.

That makes sense, being an old acquaintance.

I mean, Humanity’s Strongest Contractor’s.

“Excuse me, Jun-sama.”

And saying that, first Bonbori-san gallantly started swiping my blood with a thick towel that also was prepared beforehand. Well, it may also be her thoughtfulness about the trouble it would be if I entered this pure white castle covered in blood like this… It doesn’t change that it helped me. The Kunagisa blood flowing through my body is not infinite.

“You really are thoughtful, huh. That’s what I expected from someone in the generational maid family.”

Aunt Jun, who didn’t take any responsibility for my hemorrhage at all, started pulling those silly remarks while she wiped me. Generational maid family… What is this about? I don’t know if this is me being pulled by being in

this castle, but is the Chiga family one of the vassals that work for the Kunagisa main household?

“No, we are a family of maids that is vassal to one of the Four Gods and One Mirror, the Akagami family.”

Bonbori said.

Sorry, the expression “family of maids” was so strong that the other stuff didn’t enter my head properly… In short, is your family part of the Akagami household?

“Yes, exactly, Jun-sama. I am in the apprentice maid period now, so I am getting to help the Kunagisa Syndicate.”

Perhaps Bonbori-san was making a word play with practice period and Kunagisa Syndicate, but the “apprentice maid period” part was just too strong.

Is this like a maid version of married life training, I wonder?

To think that I would end up being part of the teaching materials of such a puzzling system… Anyway, Bonbori-san continued skillfully wiping off the blood from my body.

There wasn’t much she could do with the parts of my uniform that got soaked in blood, but, maybe due to the towel water absorption as well, my skin got tidy and clean in the end.

Was it made in Imabari?

That was in Ehime-prefecture, right?

“We should suture some of these wounds too. Can I ask you to do it, Aikawa-sama? I don’t have a doctor’s license.”

“Sure, leave it to me.”

“What? I won’t leave it, ok? Leaving my body. To you.”

Aunt Jun too doesn’t have a medical license, does she? Even her having a driver’s license is really suspicious. I’m grateful for her preparing the first-aid kit — but at least deal with it by putting double band-aids placed in an “X” or using something with a comic effect like that.

“Suture”.

“Ahaha. Jun-chan, would you ask for licenses and anesthesia at the battlefield?”

“Yes, I would. At least the anesthesia.”

“Please sit here, if it’s okay with you.”

Even while I was arguing with Aunt Jun like this, the skillful maid was promptly crawling on all fours in this same place… Crawling on all fours? The maid-san?

Is she telling me to sit on her back?

"……"

Wh-what is this…

Like, as a new door was opened inside my heart… If so, this maid-san is just too good of a gatekeeper.

But I can't say no.

Even if both her hands and her skirt got dirty with the ground, I can't say no to this maid-san that's still with a straight face while being on all fours.

"A person that can consciously and deliberately use others as a stepping stone really has something frightening about them, huh."

Aunt Jun said that while preparing the needles and threads, but is there any chance of this line being a quote from something's preface?

I timidly sat on Bonbori-san's back. My heart is kinda beating really fast. It's as if I'm doing something so wrong… It really is scary, me being able to do something like this.

Although, it's also true that my legs are almost at their limit after walking all this distance from the outer moat to the citadel, even if they were unhurt. I can't stand on my feet any longer.

Put aside the sutures. I want a blood transfusion.

My blood type is AB-, just like Dad.

"Ahaha. Seeing you sitting on someone's back like this, that makes sense, you really give this Kunagisa Tomo's daughter's feeling, you know, Jun-chan."

"What are you saying? Mom had never done something as stepping on someone."

"Right, if you think so."

Aunt Jun began with stitching my forehead (not the wound that happened in the accident, the one after it, from when she trampled my head with the high heel), it stinged.

It frustrates me but she's skilled at it.

Obviously, there's no anesthesia, so it's not like a suture procedure where there's no pain, but my whole body was hurting so much past the threshold,

like it would burst open to begin with, so it wasn't as bad as I worried.

Or maybe my brain was releasing endorphins like crazy for being not only served by this maid the same age as me, but actually doing something immoral as sitting on her back. If she has even calculated that when she crawled on all fours, Bonbonri-san, you don't need the apprentice period anymore, do you?

An exemplary maid.

"Is Bonbori-san's mother working on an island somewhere? You said something like that just now."

While being sewed here and there by Aunt Jun like a frayed plush toy, although by no means it's because I had nothing better to do, I asked Bonbori-san this.

"Yes. My three mothers are serving milady in a small, isolated island called Wet Crow's Feather Island in the Kyoto sea. My dream is to work on that island someday too."

My three mothers…?

Aunt Jun said she had two, so maybe having multiple mothers is not an unusual family environment that much…?

"So, for the sake of this dream too, I will have the privilege of serving Jun-sama earnestly as well. I know there's still some imperfect things about me, but if you would please tell me, I will correct it every single time, so please, with an open mind, order me everything you may."

"……"

What is it? The new door just keeps getting opened like its hinge is broken (it feels like now I could even fist bump with my father), putting it aside, Bonbori-san, it kinda feels like you're telling me a really long-term plan, aren't you?

Aren't you trying to grow together with me?

I mean, I'm leaving soon, you know?

I'll leave as soon as I walk a full lap in this castle, like a hasty tourist. I'll run and leave while saying "Isn't Versailles' weather so good today as well?". The minute my legs recover.

Don't be thinking that you can detain me here just because I was politely served by a maid! Just because I got to be respectfully served by a kinda cute, attractive and charming maid… Hey, what else could one ask in life?

"Doing this really reminds me of that nostalgic string-user. There's almost none of them now, you know… The users of special skills like that. As an old style like me, it's as lonely as it can get."

On the other hand, after finishing the suture in my forehead, Aunt Jun was muttering these things, moving to suturing my torso. It sounds somewhat nostalgic, but does this person feel something like loneliness?

And I've heard the one who erased all special skill users was no one other than yourself, though.

Speaking about "other"…

"Are there any other maids? Inside this castle I mean."

It's not like I would cheerfully enter it if there's more maids other than Bonbori-san, but I decided to ask about it.

"No, the ones inside the castle are all members of the Kunagisa household. The only exception is me, and I would appreciate it if you would treat me as not being there as well. So you can enjoy it with your family, without outsiders."

No way I can treat you as not being there.

It's not like you're an air chair.

Well, it's not like Aunt Jun's banter just now, but if no one of the Kunagisa family's members sat on maids, that's great then.

But, from this way of saying it…

Kunagisa household members…

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 69.

Read between the lines. Just like you read humans.

"Well, it's finished. One wounds-free Black Jack-sewing. Let's get it patched with masking tape until it heals like this."

"Why do you carry cute stationary like a girl's hobby? Please don't decorate my forehead. There are some in the first-aid kit, aren't there, normal bandages I mean."

From what it seems, the bleeding stopped, though. Before my heart was emptied… It's not because I've been sitting on a maid's back, but after resting a bit, the once dizzy field vision has now become more stable.

Now I'm able to think calmly.

And by doing so, what in the world is this situation, though… And to think I was supposed to be eating Mom's home cooking now (this is a lie. Mom doesn't cook homemade meals).

"Food has been prepared, so please rest assured."

Bonbori-san said. Even if it's the saying of a maid crawling on all fours who is more reliable than a contractor, it wasn't because I thought of something rude as that (from what I've heard from Dad, Aunt Jun is an excellent mind reading user. Why does this reckless person have something like mind-reading…), but Aunt Jun said:

"So, I'll be off then. It was nice getting to meet you, Jun-chan. Have fun with the family meeting!"

Cheerfully, as she abruptly raised her hand and started leaving. No what, wait, wait, wait!

"W-why are you leaving?"

"Eh? I mean, I just left the car there all this time."

"There's no way you're worried about illegal parking!"

"What do I do if someone steals it?"

"To have the nerve to say that while leaving the keys on it… There's no such person that would steal your car. It would take Lupin III to do it at least."

"There was also that brat Lupin now that you said it, huh."

She's really reading it, reading manga.

Was it a child between him and Mine Fujiko?

"What, do you have a problem with me leaving? I'll kill you."

"Please don't kill me just after healing me… Are you just creating problems for yourself to solve and gain credit with it?"

"There's no use staying here longer after completing the job. The request was only to take Kunagisa Tomo's daughter to this castle. My mission was completed as soon as I handed you to Bonbori. It's actually rare, you know, for me to complete a job perfectly like this."

Leaving aside she seeing this situation as perfectly completing her job, this is also something I've heard before. Humanity's Strongest Contractor's mission completing rate was 50% at best… Her dealing with it roughly, just as I experienced through the accident, might be the main reason too, but it's not just that, I think.

The gears behind a power too strong can't work that well, so the logic is that instead of solving difficult situations, she ends up destroying the situations themselves… So, with this in mind, to take the requester's granddaughter to the meeting point so as she's at least alive can't be not said as mission complete.

However, even if I say "can't be not said as mission complete", leaving

now, just like saying she doesn't want to cause any more troubles, really leaves me at a loss for words.

"You say 'at a loss for words', but don't you just need to say 'see you later'?"

"Aren't you trying to leave me while I'm in a situation that I probably won't be able to see you again? It's your friend's daughter that you kidnapped, you know?"

"You're really holding me back here, aren't you. Did Ii-tan and Kunagisa-chin raise their daughters that much spoiled? Don't worry. You're already strong enough."

"Please don't try to pose as my teacher after not coming to see me for fifteen years."

It's not like I asked you the amount of experience points I needed before the next level… You haven't taught me anything yet, you know.

I'm still around level 3.

"If you leave now, you'll really be ending up as the person that just knocked down her friend's daughter with a car and then kidnapped her. Nothing more than a kidnapper, or rather, a slave dealer."

"Mwahaha. You should've had an alarm buzzer huh, Jun-chan."

"The alarm buzzers nowadays have built-in GPS, so I can't just touch them carelessly."

Mom's rule conflicts with the prevention mindset. And it's not like if I had an alarm buzzer with me it would have fled me from this slave dealer evil reach.

"Well to be frank, I do want to continue escorting you until inside this castle, but I can't do it. Even for me, there's things that I can do and things that I can't."

Said Aunt Jun humbly.

Saying blatant lies like that, my sutured wounds aren't opening, are they? However,

"It's a World Heritage after all, you know? I can't enter it furthermore. Escorting you here up to this second gate was already quite risky, to be honest."

She said while pointing at the gate where Bonbori-san was waiting.

"I've been told that since I was your age, 'all buildings Aikawa Jun steps in collapse, no exceptions', got it? It would hurt me to destroy another World

Heritage.”

“……”

Ahh… Right, there was that.

For this person.

It’s not like a rumor or a dubious legend, it’s known as a historical fact… All buildings Aikawa Jun steps in collapse, no exceptions. The Kiyomizu Theater at my beloved hometown Kyoto was destroyed by this person to cite an example. We can’t have one of the few castles still with a castle tower being turned into castle ruins like Nijou Castle.

It would hurt me to destroy another World Heritage…

How many World Heritages has this person destroyed then? But, to think that when she was hanging out with Dad and Mom, she wouldn’t even care about such things, maybe even Aunt Jun became somewhat of an adult after living half a century. At least enough to respect historical buildings.

Then this 15-year-old brat here couldn’t just say “No, no. I don’t care about World Heritage sites, just come with me as my bodyguard”. By putting it into text just like here, it already made me tremble with how selfish and coward I could be.

“It seems you understood, Jun-chan. Your dad was fooling around and fighting the Kunagisa Syndicate alone at 13 years old, you know? Compared to that, being summoned by your grandparents is easy peasy.”

Aunt Jun said that and then started leaving once more. It seems like stopping a bit to say these things was her way of caring about her old friend’s daughter. Because, as for myself, I don’t have the strength nor the right to stop Humanity’s Strongest.

The names’ readings are the same, that’s all.

Or maybe because it’s the same as her mothers’.

“I’ll be off then. If our fates ‘meet’, then we’ll meet again. If we both survive that is.

She said that as though she was moving towards a life-risking place as well, and then, the Humanity’s Strongest Contractor turned her back on me and, while calmly waving her hand as a special guest in a cameo that ended her role, she left this World Heritage castle.

“Aikawa-san is always like that, so don’t worry. I shouldn’t be saying that, but being together with Humanity’s Strongest Contractor for some hours and still being at least alive could even be called as lucky.”

Bonbori-san who was still on all fours being a chair for me all this time while I was holding Aunt Jun back tried cheering me up, maybe because I was making too much of a gloomy face.

Well, that’s right.

To be fair, it wouldn’t be strange if I had died… It’s just that my face wasn’t gloomy because I felt like I was abandoned by Aunt Jun. It may be because that too, but not that only.

The thing is, I ended up thinking about it. Now that my wounds are sutured and finally that there’s blood flowing properly in my brain, one could say.

That makes sense. If you think about it objectively, asking for Aikawa Jun to kidnap this girl here must seem like a really bad cost-performance business decision, but it’s also quite on the mark. For both Dad and Mom, Humanity’s Strongest Contractor is a friend and one of the few persons above them at the same time. On the other hand, who besides Aunt Jun could kidnap the daughter of the Blue Savant and the Nonsense User? No one would even think about doing it, normally.

It’s precisely because it’s that abnormality that Aunt Jun is that she would amuse herself (she said it was fully business, I bet that she’s half-kidding about it. I wouldn’t be surprised if she was fully kidding, even) and stuck her nose into Kunagisa Syndicate’s family trouble… However, at the same time, this could also invite an unpredictable puzzling variable into this situation.

Without any exaggeration, this could have effects on the Kunagisa Syndicate’s survival itself. At that time, when she forced the Sumiyuri School, where I’m enrolled, into closing too, what was requested of her was merely “rescuing one student”. How could she close the school just by completing this request?

It took five years for *that* Four Gods and One Mirror to rebuild it from what I’ve heard…

In other words, the requesters, Grandpa and Grandma’s true intentions were of her kidnapping me before at the timing of me coming back home, and nothing besides that. Although, saying this intention clearly to Aunt Jun is not a good idea. I spent just some time with her, but she’s certainly the type of person that loves to do what others don’t want her to do. If they asked her to not do anything uncalled for, she would maybe just do it.

That’s why.

That’s why — *The Kunagisa Castle* then?

Not the main house, not any villa or secondary house, but Kunagisa Castle World Heritage.

They chose a treasured place to humanity where Aunt Jun would willingly retreat as the family meeting place… So she could not escort me no matter what.

"……"

It's nothing but a theory… But, wait… How could I say, this calculating-ness gives such a bad impression. It would normally be the place to be impressed by Kunagisa Syndicate ability of being able to manipulate that uncontrollable contractor, that flawless, audacious, and One-Hit K.O. Aikawa Jun to this extent… It should be the place to think "as expected of Mom's household"… But, after all is said and done, it just feels weird.

As someone called Jun, this way of *dealing with Aikawa Jun just like they wanted* makes me feel boiling with rage. It's weird to feel it while almost being murdered by her, though… No, actually, maybe what makes me angry is that, by me taking such risks while dealing with Aunt Jun, those grandparents could afford not taking any risks at all.

It gets me wanting to retaliate somehow, or rather, it's the feeling to represent all children and outwit these sly adults.

That's why, if I wanted to unfold a drastic plan, I could run out of this Kunagisa Castle at full throttle now that Aunt Jun left the stage (let's put aside whether that was Kunagisa Syndicate's plan or not), but while I did hit upon that with my youthful indiscretion, I just wasn't able to apply this idea.

Well, it's not like I received a blood transfusion, so, if tried running full-throttle in this condition, I would fall into the moat like an acorn, and also, even if I'm the daughter of devils, I'm not a brute, so I can't just do something unfair as fleeing at full speed after sitting on this maid, who bravely turned into a chair by crawling on all fours for all this time while I was recovering myself and getting my wounds stitched.

Even if I'm a light-weight girl, I also don't think I can escape Bonbori-san, since she had the physique to be someone's chair for such a long period.

Furthermore, there's one more reason to not escape this Kunagisa Castle. A reason for this being a good place to have this undesired family meeting… If it is this castle which happens to be a World Heritage and also happens to be a historical building from hundreds of years ago, then, I don't need to infringe the law. Mom's absolute law.

Don't touch machines.

Perhaps, is this also a reason for here being the "neutral zone"? If then, I feel much obliged for all this consideration, but it's like I just had my excuse

firmly blocked, so I just can't be happy about this.

Hmph.

I may be able to get around it without touching any machines, but on the other hand, something else it's being touched huh.

My anger. Or rather, my sanity.

Really, I'm serious about this.

3

Maybe I wouldn't be able to close the newly opened door in my heart anymore, like the ones in those bars from the western genre movies, but having said that, it's not like I can be here sitting on Bonbori-san's back forever. At this rate, I can be sitting here until the sunset and this loyal maid may won't even have changed her complexion, but even then, let's get up.

I am Kunagisa Jun. A proud shield[1].

It may seem like it's kinda double-tongued for me to be acting tough as soon as Aunt Jun left, but there's no way Nonsense User's daughter has only two tongues. I'm the type of person like Suneo when it comes to acting tough when Gian is not around.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No.18

Don't be afraid of contradictions.
Double standards won't always lead to double binds.

"Well then, let me show you around. Please come this way. Would you mind if I keep calling you 'Jun-sama'? Or maybe you would prefer it if I altered it to 'master'?"

Bonbori-san asked, after standing up with a nonchalant look, brushing the dirt off her skirt in the area around her knees, and politely wiping her hands with a handkerchief. If a maid-san around my age asks me something like this with a straight face, I'll end up getting flustered, but, unfortunately, I don't have the courage to ask her to refer to me as "master".

"That's fine as it is. Bonbori-San."

Because of its origin, I never really liked this name, and today, by having a chance meeting with the contractor that is that origin herself, this feeling got stronger, but it's not like I have an arrhythmia and get all dizzy just by being called as "Jun-sama".

On the other hand, dark clouds started to show above the Kunagisa

surname that once I indifferently thought of as cool… It brings up memories from when I was bullied because of it at elementary school. I won't be able to just let it off by saying the *kanji* characters on it looks cool.

"Understood, Jun-sama. I wouldn't mind if you called me "Bonbori" without any honorifics, you know?"

"Hahaha."

Feigned laughter.

I don't have the courage to do that either.

"Please come this way."

As soon as she said it, Bonbori-san crossed the gate without making any footsteps' sound. Her gestures are so clean that I couldn't mimic her even if I moved after seeing her move first. Even if my health conditions were perfect right now.

So, as my attention was going to things like the maid-san, the maid-san, the maid-san, the maid-san, the maid-san, the maid-san, the maid-san, or the maid-san, I had completely forgotten about the castle, but after crossing the gate and turning onto an uphill path that looked like Escher's infinite stairs, we got to a place where you could see the Kunagisa Castle from a below-diagonal angle.

It's a perspective that looks like it suddenly got closer to us.

Well, it's simply stunning. Of course, as a Kyoto citizen, I would like to put emphasis on that, if Nijou Castle still existed, it would have at least this impressiveness… Well, I don't actually know how Nijou Castle was when it existed.

"Excuse me, Bonbori-san. Does Bonbori-san know? I mean, Mom and Dad."

I casually turned my back on the castle tower and asked this to the maid-san who was walking ahead. It's not just a hunch, I've actually heard about the Wet Crow's Feather Island before. It's just that the thing about her having three mothers had such an impact that the conversation went in that direction, though… Right, Dad and Mom had actually traveled to that island before.

"Yes. I know them. I've never actually met with them, but I've heard that my mothers were helped by them a lot before."

Mothers…

If they are all maids, weren't my parents that were helped for being in their care?

"So, that's why I'm looking forward from the bottom of my heart. To be serving the daughter of those legendary parents of yours like this."

“Er… well, well.”

I almost apologized saying “I’m sorry to let you down”, but then I changed my mind.

Maybe I shouldn’t show myself as a weakling like that. Even if she says she’s serving me, her employer still is the Kunagisa family… It wouldn’t surprise me if this talk it’s being leaked.

However, “legend”, from all the things she could say.

I’m sure those two didn’t have any decent legends about them.

“I’m also happy to be around a wonderful maid like you, Bonbori-san. Dad really likes maids… It must be because he was treated kindly by your mothers.”

It must be useless to say such flattery after sitting on her back, but I wondered if I couldn’t get some information from Bonbori-san, so I started saying those things while rubbing my hands.

Let’s put aside liking maids or not, I’ve heard that this way of doing things was Dad’s signature move. It seems he was a professional at making his enemies betray. Really, it isn’t something to speak highly of.

“Just by being able to make acquaintance with you Bonbori-san, I can say that it was worth it to come to this Kunagisa Castle. To be honest, I think it’s good if I leave now, but I can’t thank my grandparents enough for introducing me to a new friend. Wait, what’s that? Now that I think of it, I wasn’t informed the reason why they kidnapped me. It’s a trivial matter, but I can’t help but to think of it. Bonbori-san, haven’t you heard about anything? It can be any small detail.”

The last part ended up sounding like a police detective’s interrogation (Dad has a friend that is the general head of Kyoto Prefectural Police), but the royal maid answered:

“What I was informed of was to provide a living here without any discomfort during your stay.”

In an indifferent way.

It’s like the opposite of a tsundere. Her manners are respectful, but the most important things give a blunt feeling to her words.

Damn it, I will end up falling for her.

But, well, there was already some earned information with this single exchange… The “during your stay” part — in other words, they plan to make me *stay* here… They won’t let me go back to Kyoto right away. Not only staying, but by the nuance of her words, they plan a long stay it seems.

And just with this, I can't expect something peaceful as Aunt Jun said about wanting to see their granddaughter's face.

"Is that so? You have such a high professionalism, Bonbori-san. Even if I don't mind you loosen up a bit, that makes me feel lonely. However, putting aside your job this time, I'm interested in knowing how you usually work. You said you were in the apprentice maid period at Kunagisa Syndicate, but your employers, my grandparents in this case, what type of person are they?"

"I've signed a non-disclosure agreement, so even if you are their granddaughter, I still cannot talk about private information regarding the Kunagisa Syndicate"

"Oh no! Did I perhaps sound as I was investigating you!? Oopsies, it's my fault for inviting such a misunderstanding! Oh my! You're so pure and cute, Bonbori-san! It wasn't my intention, really! Unlike Dad, I'm so clumsy with my words, so I couldn't convey my true intentions properly, you know~? It's just that, just that I wanted to get along with you, Bonbori-san! Am I really Dad's daughter, I wonder."

"Who knows. From what I've heard from my mothers, you sound just like your father."

That's upsetting.

It felt like I was insulted in a way that couldn't be translated overseas.

I also wonder what the maid family says between themselves about Dad… Putting that aside, let's change the approach.

"And what about Mom? Do I look like her? If she had come with me you could compare us… It's weird isn't it? I wonder why did Grandpa and Grandma call only me and not Mom too? If you asked Aunt Jun, she wouldn't even had needed to kidnap her, she could just bring her as a friend. Bonbori-san, do you know what's the reason behind this?"

"No matter what reason is there, I only need to obey my masters."

"Didn't you want to meet them too? My legendary parents."

I don't know if she surrendered or pitied me after I still tried to get into her even after her cold answers, but then Bonbori-san said:

"Well, actually, I would like to meet your father at least once if I could."

Hm? Why Dad only?

"…How old are you, Bonbori-san?"

Well, I felt like this was going anywhere, so I tried putting it down for a moment and then asking this. This is something I was curious about, actually. I've been thinking of her as the same age as me, but talking to her like that

now makes me feel quite a presence, or rather, a dignity coming from her.

May it's that, while looking to be a teenager, she's actually much older? If so, I would need to change the way I've been talking to her as casually as I was. I won't be able to erase me sitting on her back no matter how I change it, though.

"I'll be fourteen this year."

"Younger! I thought about that possibility too, but having sat on a younger girl's back really gives a bad impression!"

"Or maybe I will be twenty-four."

It's not like she saw through my mind, but for some reason Bonbori-san said this weird joke… Well, even if she were actually older than me, she couldn't be 24 years old, I think.

So I laughed off this statement and then.

"So, fourteen, huh? One year of difference, then. No wonder I felt so close to you. I'm an only child, but if I had a younger sister, maybe she would be like you, Bonbori-san."

And then I tried getting back at the investigation's main thread.

It was this nasty technique of trying to appeal to her guilt saying that kidnapping Dad and Mom's only daughter it's hurting them (to be honest, I have no idea of how they would react to me being kidnapped. They are aware that I was supposed to come back home, so I do think that if time goes on and I don't arrive they will worry about me, but I'm not sure about it. Thinking of their special upbringings, there's also a chance of them viewing being kidnapped in one's childhood not much different from taking a detour to buy a snack and eat it), but Bonbori-san reacted in an unexpected way here.

Although she had just now a straight face she kept throughout here even when being on all fours, suddenly, it seemed like she lost her composure, and then she turned to me and:

"Wh-what are you saying, T-t-to say something like me being your little sister! What proof do you say you have about my mothers and your father having an unhealthy relationship fifteen years ago? Please stop saying such irresponsible things!"

She raised her voice and neared me while shouting this.

Eh, didn't she just say something really scary right now?

Why did this unfold in me discovering Dad's infidelity when being kidnapped by Mom's family!? Did Dad have such a cute daughter after cheating with a maid somewhere!? That's why Bonbori-san said she only wanted to meet with him!?

“Just kidding.”

She said, after suddenly going back to the straight face.

“Jun-sama was too ill-mannered, inquisitively asking such things, so, as a maid, I allowed myself to chastise you in this way.”

“Please. Don’t!”

That was reaally scary.

It felt so real! And Dad does like maids, you know!? I wouldn’t doubt him doing it, and, as his daughter, I shouldn’t be saying this, but I’ve heard that person had a young teenage girl as his slave! And this person became my babysitter! And also, I thought this here was the shocking truth revealed at the climax of the first half!

“The Jun-chan here thought her heart would stop! No, it’s not that, I really think that it would be nice if you were my little sister… It’s just that this joke about Dad having an affair with the three maids was too shocking! And if you count it backwards, it would’ve happened just after my birth! Having an affair is always wrong, but this would’ve been the affair of affairs!”

Just thinking about it makes me feel bad!

I was sure that, while having those parents, I was raised relatively on the right path, so if this were true, I would end up being the isolated daughter!

“Hehehe. If you learned your lesson, then please refrain from doing such ill-mannered things such as prying into others’ privacy, Jun-sama.”

“I’ll engrave it in my heart.”

I got rebuked by a younger girl.

No, that’s not it, was it this much of a sin, though, just by prying into the reasons for being kidnapped, as its victim…

That was awful.

It was more awful than the accident.

My body and my heart are shattered. Even I must admit that trying to turn someone into a betrayer was the worst. Even if it wasn’t as bad as cheating with three maids, though.

“What a bad joke, you know. Er, it’s not like I’m suspicious of you, it’s actually to make sure I can trust you, Bonbori-san, ah, it’s really nothing about trying to get information from you this time, okay?”

While ending up being really cautious about it, I fearfully tried asking at her back as she started walking ahead again.

“If Dad it’s not your father, who is your father then…”

Depending on how you look at it, I still didn’t learn my lesson, trying to pry into someone else’s family. Still, even then, I couldn’t be looking into the Chiga’s family anymore. It’s not about the “each to their own, others to theirs; people are stone walls, people are castles” maxim, much wiser than Dad’s Nonsense Series, though (hm?); but as expected, the thing here is that it wasn’t the time to be curious about families somewhere else.

As I turned the corner to go around the stone walls of the castle tower, Mom was there.

Eh?

My mind got wide-opened. It was more than jaw-dropping, it was to the extent I thought my jaw fell down.

Although I did ask insistently Bonbori-san why was I the only one kidnapped, while the original isolated daughter, Mom, had not been invited to the Kunagisa Castle (and this resulted in me almost having a heart attack though), I wasn’t expecting something like Mom being here before me. Wait, no.

There’s no way.

It was not that.

She’s my own mother after all. Even if I was separated from her for these past months at the dormitory, and even if by following Mom’s rule I wasn’t able to sneakily make a remote call to my home like my roommates at the dormitory did, she was still my family. I didn’t even need to stare, and I don’t know if it’s called the turret or the watch tower, but the one that appeared after turning that corner clearly *wasn’t Mom*.

For starters.

The time when Kunagisa Tomo, Mom, had blue hair and blue eyes in that way — *in that way* was now long gone.

A long hair enough to completely cover her small build upper body, and the blue eyes that quietly gazed at me.

I know she isn’t my mother.

But Dad has shown me in albums. It was this snapshot thing that’s now called as retro, but… *My mother at 19 years old was just like her.*

Of course, my mother at 19 years old didn’t wear a twelve-layered kimono so fitting (unlike an apron dress) to this World Heritage castle, though…

Is there a chance it's a time-slip?

Wait, no. I'm not trying to vie with "Harry Potter and the Cursed Child" at all, you know? I wouldn't do such a disrespectful and overreaching thing as… And, while I was trembling with fear like this:

"…Uni."

She said.

This young Mom-like girl said that and turned her back on me… She took a wide turn to detour the castle tower and started running, as she was running from us. I said she started running, but it was a fantasy-like movement as a fairy that flew as if being blown by the wind — but then I instinctively pursued her, though.

Like I'd forgotten that my whole body received sutures just a moment ago, I overtook Bonbori-san in the forward-bent posture as in short-distance races and turned the other side after the castle corner.

No, there's no way.

When she fully broke-off with the Kunagisa family, Mom lost the blue hair and blue eyes that were proof of her being a special child. She mostly lost it.

She barely remained with an odd eye only.

Just now I checked Bonbori-san's age, but for when Mom had stopped growing at what looked like a little girl's age, conversely, maybe no one could assure her age.

The ones that know that period often would unanimously say:

It was like a youkai.

Even Mom herself self-deprecatingly said that… As her daughter, I thought that she was just photogenic or maybe even skillfully altered the images before printing it, and so I didn't take it that seriously, but also, with this situation of being in a historical building's core like I am now, I felt like a ghost story witness.

"Mom—…"

I quickly reached her.

Or rather, after turning the second corner of the castle tower, the blue fairy — or rather, youkai — was standing there, alongside another fairy — or rather, youkai.

With the other one also being blue haired with blue eyes.

"……!"

For a moment, I even thought that it was a Clone Jutsu. I thought that even though this isn't a ninja castle like the ones in Shiga prefecture and Mie prefecture.

There's two Moms… No, if you include the real Mom, then there's three of them.

Three Moms?

Yes, yes. It's a common thing, isn't it?

Happens often, I guess?

However, this "third Mom" that appeared now, putting aside the fact that she was wearing a blue roses pattern yukata with a fabric so thin that almost looked like it was transparent, unlike the "second Mom" who was wearing the twelve-layered kimono, she had short hair, as if she were Mom from even before the time for the "second Mom".

Alongside the second one and just like her, both of her blue eyes were staring at me while I was still trying to catch my breath. As if she was deeply prying into me, so much it seemed like she would gouge my eyes.

Unlike the so much peaceful long haired one, this Mom wasn't in any photos. But not because she never had it short.

But because at the time when she cut her blue hair like this, she was a really dreadful criminal. Let alone photographs, she erased all records of her appearance, the period when she was the leader behind the actually legendary "Team".

Dead Blue.

Make Hell the Hell named Hell.

"……"

Although I caught up to her, I ended up flinching. Before the two Moms… And also the two *past* Moms on top of it.

If the long hair was when she was nineteen, the short hair was from around fifteen, I guess? Exactly the same age as me… No, actually, asking the age of someone as Kunagisa Tomo is just plainly useless.

Blue hair and blue eyes.

A special child.

Unlike me, black haired with black eyes from birth — a special child.

"……Uni"

"Uni……"

And once more.

And once more, Mom, along with Mom, aligned their feet and started running. As they were running from me. Without letting a single pebble fall off in this World Heritage's ground, with bare feet that don't seem to even have a plantar arch, to the other side of the castle tower, elegantly.

I shuddered.

No, well, I actually want to quickly chase them once more, but the thought of reaching them again and then seeing one more Mom in there just made me afraid.

A megalomania, to put it lightly, but I already witnessed two young Moms in a row. What happens twice—

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 86

What happens twice won't happen again.

"What do you mean with "uni"!"

If they want to multiply, then it doesn't matter if there are three or four of them. No matter how much they multiply, no matter her age she is, Mom is Mom. She's not worth fearing, no, wait, she actually scares me. But she's my mom. No matter from which period she was. I made up my mind and then turned around the corner.

And after all, the one there was:

"Nice to meet you, my noble niece."

It wasn't my fourth Mom.

It was an extremely normal adult man — well, right after seeing two moms at least, it could be said that was a complete well-mannered adult man wearing not a kimono even, but a proper, normal, suit with a handkerchief in his breast pocket.

His hair styled with gel and his eyes behind glasses were pitch black, just like me… Or actually, when it comes to his hair, considering his age, there's a chance it was dyed graying hair, though…

The two past Mom youkai, or rather, clones, were holding each of this adult man's hands, one at each side. Like it was their default position…

“…Uncle Nao.”

I muttered.

It’s not like he already said his name, but this was for sure. Although it’s not as the head of the Kunagisa Syndicate is shown on business magazines’ covers, his emitted latent presence is one that, at least if you live on the western side of Japan, makes you understand who he is once you meet him.

It’s not really because he’s a blood relative.

Nor even because he called me niece, or because he’s Mom’s blood-related older brother.

“…Nice to meet you. I am Kunagisa Jun.”

I’m Kunagisa Jun. A proud shield.

Even if he appeared out of nowhere, I’ll introduce myself first.

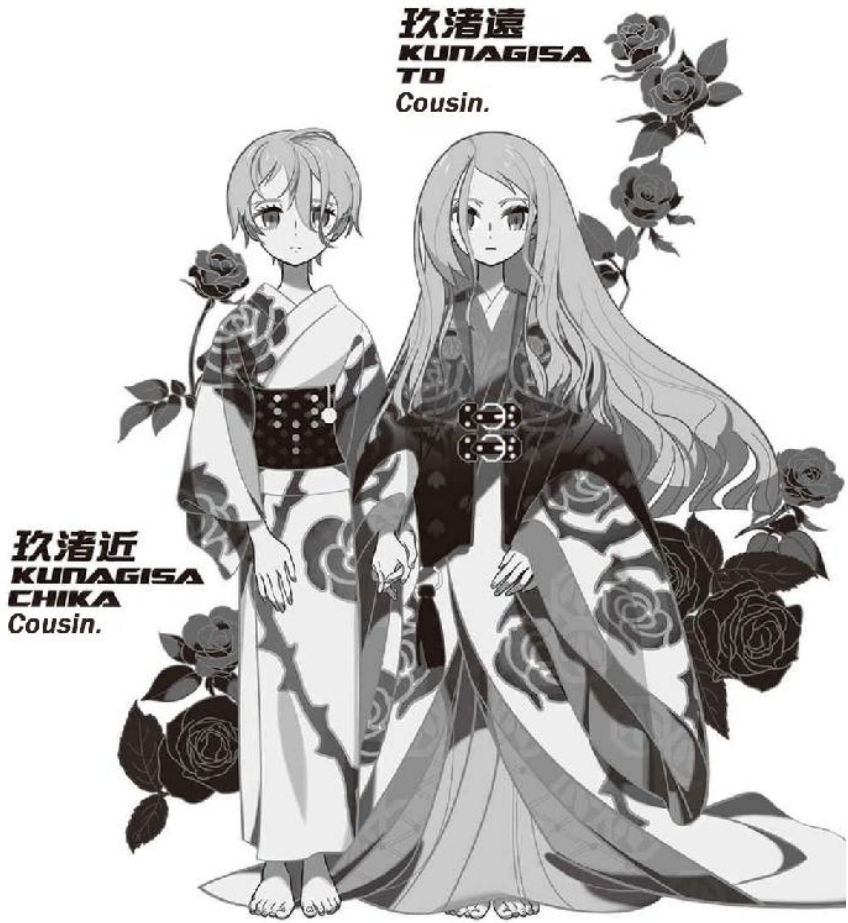
And also, no matter if it was out of nowhere or not, because he appeared directly at this place like this, I could roughly get the idea of what these two Mom’s true identities were.

“Let me introduce you.”

While smiling dandily, the Kunagisa Syndicate Head pointed the two blue girls on both sides one after another. One after another, fairly, for each one that looked just like “sisters”.

“Kunagisa Too and Kunagisa Chika[34]. Your noble cousins, Jun-san.”

First Day (3) –
The Kunagisa Family



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Cherish words that begin with “A”.

Appreciative, amour, ardor.

Even if it’s average, even if it’s amazing,

Even after arguments, even after abandoning,

Authentic and just as you are,

Accept it and keep advancing,

As you accelerate ahead.

(Dad’s Nonsense Series - No. 49)

1

They say, “when you come here to see it, Mount Fuji is not that great”. They also say, “No specialty tastes good”. There’s this thing where, while you are hearing about specialties and famous places or reading about them in books is the optimum, and when you do visit or experience those things, these expectations you had imagined before may end up letting you a bit down, not as if you didn’t like it, but rather as it didn’t quite reach satisfyingly all you had imagined about it.

A bit like “It’s still an excursion until you get back home”, the most fun part of a trip is planning it, and when you get back home you think “being home is best after all”.

What do I want to say with that? The World Heritage Kunagisa Castle seen from close did amaze me, and its dignified appearance was more than one could get from textbooks and photobooks, but even then, when I got to enter the castle tower, my reaction was basically “Well, what a standard Japanese room it is”.

It’s not like the *fusuma* and *tatami* in it got me thinking “The victory goes to our Nijou Castle’s”… And also, because the events before entering the castle were so tempestuous, there was also this part of me that didn’t sort out its feelings yet.

“Please wait here for a moment, Jun-sama. The reception will begin soon.”

And then, Bonbori-san left me at a place like a reception room at the castle’s first tower and went somewhere. Of course, the uncle I’ve never seen before and the two cousins I didn’t know existed are not here. From what it

seems, they are in the watchtower now.

Is this, along with Mom's parents — my grandparents — being on the top floor, a form of showing respect? He's no Aunt Jun, so I don't think is afraid of destroying buildings by entering them. But those "two Moms" were their granddaughters too, though.

It might just be that it feels awkward for the Head, since he did a coup d'état towards his previous generation, though.

"…Cousins, huh?"

Although it was just a small talk following the situation, and although I was punished more than enough for it, the shock was big, as I was just treating the one-year younger Bonbori-san as my little sister, and just right after chatting about those things with her… Maybe even a SF turn of events like if I actually had made a time slip and encountered Moms' golden age after crossing the gate, it wouldn't surprise me as much as this.

As this shock had still not left my body, although it was ill-mannered, I lied there and spread down. Well, I am injured in fact, lying here wouldn't be hurting anyone.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 38

There is no heritage more important than life.

"……"

Well, it seems those cousins were not mimicking fairies just to show their dominance on me (if that were the case, they would be playing *temari* at least), it seems they wanted to take a glance at what the kidnapped person brought here looked like, so they went lurking around the castle tower… Uncle Nao was then looking for them, as their father.

Father…

I've heard about him from Mom and Dad, but I didn't know he was married. No, wait, maybe he isn't? I didn't see anyone looking like their mother, maybe he's a single father then.

Going on a family trip at this World Heritage greatly differs from the society's usual image of a single father, but still a single father is a single father.

I remember Bonbori-san's words.

"The ones inside the castle are all members of the Kunagisa household" — from that roundabout way to say it, I thought about people from the Kunagisa family other than my grandparents being there, but to think that it would be the most important one, the Kunagisa Syndicate's head.

Although it's a large building, it must be rare to have these many "Kunagisa" members in a single building, or rather, extremely rare, I guess. Grandparents, uncle, two cousins, and me…

Six Kunagisas.

Hmm, even then, I wouldn't have imagined meeting them in a way like this. For the cousins that I didn't know about just-just-just until now, and for Uncle Nao too.

I've heard from a lot of people that it's not like they were in a bad terms relationship as siblings, or rather, for Uncle Nao, Mom was always his adorable little sister (even when she went off the rails), but since Mom had break-off with the Kunagisa family, and two times even, the contact between siblings got hard, I guess… Well, if it was like that before, then now, with him being the Syndicate Head and so on, there might be this thing about his standpoint as the family leader as well.

To think that I ended up meeting with Mom's real brother that she had not seen for almost 20 years… You really can't know what situations are arising in this world.

Not even what is lying asleep.

Even if you ignore the age difference of about five years, when comparing him to Dad and Mom, he seemed like a decent person.

However, raising your children in a way that they *look quite like Mom* makes me want to say something… That wasn't in the level of just happening to look alike since they're family.

It clearly was arranged to be that way.

It seems that the long-haired is Too-chan and the short-haired is Chika-chan… As I saw in Bonbori-san's case, it seems I don't have the talent for measuring people's age ("How old do I look?"), so I said those things about one being nineteen and the other one fifteen, but, actually, both of them were 13-year-old twins.

13 years old

About the age Dad and Mom had when they first met…

From what I've heard, it seems that Mom stopped aging from that point for a while, so my readings were not all that wrong.

The 13-year-old Nonsense User and the 13-year-old Blue Savant.

My father, who wanted to quickly turn into an adult, and Mom, who dreamed about being a child forever… No, well, no matter how emotionally I word this, it's just disgusting, isn't it?

An older brother raising your own daughters to look like his little sister.

I am her true daughter after all, so I can tell apart Mom, Too-chan and Chika-chan, but even if it's not as far as a Clone Jutsu, it still looks like he's raising body doubles.

I said like they were siblings on good terms, but this more like a *siscon*… For compliance nowadays, excessive love between family members may be classified as a requirement for domestic violence.

I don't know what was common sense twenty years ago, though… Maybe, because of this, Uncle Nao and Dad used to get along. She's now deceased, but Dad also had a little sister he held dear, it seems. Did he project her on Mom, was it that?

Everyone's little sister: Kunagisa Tomo?

Putting aside when she was a teenager, if she's still treated like that even after becoming an adult their age, that's a bit tough, isn't it…? I ended up saying that to Bonbori-san, but I'm really glad about being an only child, actually.

But with this, there was one less possibility to worry about.

It was just a teasing rather than even a possibility when Aunt Jun said that hypothesis about them calling the illegitimate child here to inherit the Kunagisa Syndicate, but now it was completely gone. Usually illegitimate it's used to describe the children born between a noble man and a woman that it's not his legal wife, so in my case it's the opposite, but it seems I won't even need to take part in this gender bias updating. And I'm not telling a joke about they calling me to inherit the crown, but rather to be an entertaining clown, it's not that.

I mean, blue hair and blue eyes.

If there are special children that look like past Mom, and two of them even, then there's no role for this representation of the ordinary, this black-haired and black-eyed girl here to play.

It was also the first time I've seen twins, but they do really look alike, huh… If you compared them with photos, then you could probably distinguish them from teenage Mom, but as for between Too-chan and Chika-chan, your chances to take it right could be 50% maybe.

Even if things like clothes and hairstyles were so blatantly different between them. Aren't even their fingerprints the same, for those two?

Really, I'm serious about this.

Or actually, I should think of it in the opposite direction maybe. This was also the case for Mom, but for the genes behind the blue hair and blue eyes that flow in the Kunagisa family to manifest so strongly like that… It is an

individuality that can even bury its own individuality.

Even in manga I often read, if a character has a personality too strong, it has a risk of it ending up as a mere template… And when it happens it isn't at the level of the "characters overlapping", it can even make the whole work plain.

When it comes to mystery novels, it's like "Sherlock Holmes" ending up as a synonym for detective… So even for the detective image depicted in a completely different eastern island country, it can be seen the Holmes-ness in it…

Aunt Jun said I was just like Mom — except my hair and my eyes. This is something that I feel too, actually.

But the Kunagisa family won't think this way, I guess.

They won't think of a not blue-haired and not blue-eyed Kunagisa Tomo looking just like Kunagisa Tomo at all. They just won't. "Where in the world are these useless genes from?"… "Are you really that prodigy's daughter?" there's no use even if they may get suspicious like that.

Wait there, if I say those things I may be advised to do therapy by it being interpreted as me leaving my parents and going to a dormitory school due to the trauma of holding since very young a complex towards Mom about things like the color of my hair and my iris, but, seriously, I've never worried that much about these things.

The Mom I know now has every single strand of her hair black, and only one eye has a bit of blue remaining in it… She's lost almost every special thing that made her a special child, and that's the normal now.

Not only her looks, but her insides too had became one of a "normal adult". The "normal adult" that Blue Savant didn't want to become that much.

The eccentric behavior and speech, the special skills too were all lost.

It's not like she lost her memories, so she has a quite fair amount of knowledge about computers, but regrettably it's the steadily evolving IT industry we're talking about. Mom doesn't even get things that are usual now but weren't when she was at her prime like digital money, to an extent that she now let Dad deal with setting these things up.

So, I'm not a mother-con in that meaning, also. Even if I see her photos with blue hair and blue eyes, even if I listen to rumors about her, well, the only thing I think is that "Mom also had a time when she was full-high spirits didn't she?".

At least, I don't have a history of molding my personality with an inferiority complex by being compared with Mom like Dad did long ago… I don't dislike self-depreciative jokes, but it's also not the age for thinking "anyway, this is not for someone like me…" anymore.

A world that recognizes diversity.

It's okay for people like me to exist.

To be fair, even Uncle Nao who has been the Kunagisa Syndicate for almost twenty years didn't have blue hair and blue eyes, and conversely Mom was (although by her own fault) cut off from them when she had blue hair and blue eyes, so it's not like the "special children" have a tradition of being always high valued by the Kunagisa household, I guess.

…Although, even if I think like that, by seeing those two blue-haired and blue-eyed children like that, just in front of me, I can't help but say that it made me overwhelmed.

I mean, like, it's as if they are surpassing logic.

They really give that "special being" atmosphere.

In the end, Uncle Nao quickly took them back to the watchtower, so I didn't get to have any real conversation with them (or actually, those two only said "uni", "uni-uni", I may even), and even then, how can I say it, just with a passing-by like that, which wasn't really a coincidence, it was as if our gradings were done already.

So that's why it isn't.

It isn't a turn of events about me being called here to this Kunagisa Castle as the one to inherit the Kunagisa Syndicate… I wasn't expecting it at all, but it would be a lie to say I didn't feel at least a little bit like I'd been let down after thinking I was about to get a surprise attack.

With this, if I truly was a low self-esteem 15-year-old it would be enough for me to go back home, but for me, after coming this far, I couldn't avoid caring about the reason why they kidnapped me in broad daylight.

I don't think about inheriting the huge fortune the Kunagisa Syndicate has, if I don't get at least a New Year's gift from this, it just won't be worth it.

Today is not New Year's Day, but I will allow myself to receive fifteen years' worth of New Year's gifts.

"Thank you for waiting, Jun-sama. Rui-sama and Hoda-sama's preparations are set, so let us move to the castle's top, I mean, the top floor[36]."

As I finally found a goal after just drifting to where things' were flowing to ("let's get that New Year's gift!"), as expected from the 14-year-old professional, I may say, as she had just aimed at me thinking those things, the pure descendant of the maid family, Bonbori-san, came opening the *shoji* door.

Compared to that, this one year older me here, even while wearing a skirt, I was seen lying spread down, so I couldn't be more embarrassed than that. Even if Bonbori-san crawled on all fours, she wouldn't lie spread down on the

floor like that, I suppose.

She, who held a first-aid kit at the second gate, was holding a round wooden tray this time, with teacups and a water jug placed on it — and also pills.

Are those painkillers?

Did they finally feel like bringing me anesthesia?

“It’s antibiotics. Aikawa-sama’s sutures were perfect, but, unlike that Humanity’s Strongest Contractor whose existence itself is the embodiment of antigens, Jun-sama’s wounds have a high chance of forming pus.”

You’re saying quite realistic things before my meeting with that nobility that those grandparents are, huh.

Well, a story where, after being hit by Aunt Jun’s car and narrowly surviving, I just die from tetanus is just an unbearable despair.

I will gratefully accept them.

“Can I have it mouth-to-mouth, perhaps?”

“Oh dear. Do you want to listen to Dad and my mothers’ love stories again?”

“I’m so sorry, I got carried away.”

It seems that maids aren’t just about obeying their masters, huh… I raised my upper body and gulped down two, three antibiotic pills and swallowed the water she brought.

“…You put them in your mouth too easily for someone who was kidnapped. Both the pills and the water. Didn’t you think about them being poisoned?”

Was this a question as a professional maid too? I insensitively asked all those questions to her before, but now that I think of it, maybe this was the first time she asked me about something.

Killing me by poison. I didn’t think about that in the slightest.

It would’ve been a good opportunity to say “It’s because I trust you from the bottom of my heart” and impress her, but really, it’s just that I didn’t think of anything to be honest… That’s right, even if I wasn’t called here to be the next heir, this possibility still existed.

I lacked sense of danger.

The possibility of someone being scared of the supposedly disowned Kunagisa Tomo’s daughter claiming heirship (the “New Year’s gift”?), and then

wanting to make the first move by killing me… There's been a while since I've read works such as "The Village of Eight Graves" and "The Inugami Family", so I couldn't summarize and explain easily how murky things were, but I understood that if it's a Kunagisa family trouble, then, at least one death wouldn't be strange at all.

Although, while almost dying in a traffic accident, I didn't expect the possibility of me being killed. Did they hire Humanity's Strongest Contractor for the kidnapping because they didn't care if I died in the process?

I suddenly got nervous.

"……"

"…I'm kidding, please rest assured. Those are full-fledged antibiotics. At least we avoided you dying by tetanus with this."

As she said that, Bonbori-san urged me to get up. Apparently, she didn't threaten me for nothing, this time's "kidding" was her way of advising me to brace myself for the upcoming meeting, it seems.

Well, there's no way she wouldn't worry about a child kidnapping victim who was lying spread down on the floor… It seems that maids aren't about just obeying, huh.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 4.

Hire a maid inside your heart

Frankly, this may be the best Nonsense, Dad.

"Alriiight. Then, let's go."

"I shall accompany you, Jun-sama."

"By the way, are Rui and Hoda Grandpa and Grandma's names perhaps?"

"Indeed. The previous Syndicate Head and now the Honorary Syndicate Head, Kunagisa Rui-sama, and also this Kunagisa Castle's master, Kunagisa Hoda-sama."

"Hummm. Those are some weird names."

2

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 9.

Different names must not be laughed at.
A different name is a well thought name.

This is a Dad's Nonsense which should be held as a set with the Nonsense No. 1, but letting aside whether they're weird or not, I wasn't aware that I didn't know my mother side's grandfather and grandmother's names until Bonbori-san confirmed them just now.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 19

All things are named.

Should I take it as being part of the set too…? Now that I think of it, although both Mom and Dad would often talk about her brother (and his brother-in-law) Kunagisa Nao casually like at dinner, and even now they would talk about him, they wouldn't mention Grandpa and Grandma, Mom's parents, that is (and parents-in-law in Dad's case), not in the least.

To the point that they made me not even be aware of it.

Of course, I knew Mom had been disowned by her family, so I would think of it as "Ah… She's doing that, isn't she… Such a bumpkin", but to think that she wouldn't say her parents' names to her own daughter, it's quite of a quite.

Kunagisa Rui.

Kunagisa Hoda.

Although, now that I do know their names, it's not like I can't get why Mom didn't tell them to me.

I'm right in the midst of the rebellious phase, but I'm also a child who can understand her parents… By actually knowing their names, their existence came true to life.

No, well, it's obvious that they do exist (or else I wouldn't. It's the circle of life), and by hearing from Aunt Jun that they are the requesters I could infer they were alive, but still, when I did get to know their names, I could perceive them as actual human beings rather than a mere family member.

I ended up perceiving it.

When it comes to that, trying not to be aware of them is difficult… Dad's Nonsense Series No. 1 "first introduce yourself" was well said of him.

On the other hand, by caring about anonymity more than his own life and not saying his name, maybe he was trying to be like a ghost, not able to be perceived nor seen by anyone, I wonder… Now that I know it, I can't ignore it.

Because now I don't perceive them as the vague impression I had of those grandparents being my grandpa and grandma, but rather as Kunagisa Rui and Kunagisa Hoda.

I would like to leave my options to the very last, but if it comes to this, I can't leave the castle without meeting them. Even if Mom wouldn't wish for this situation at all.

Sorry, Mom.

That is to say, if they don't want me meeting them so much, to the extent of not even mentioning their names, then they could also clearly order me saying "Don't meet your grandparents". If so, I would've obeyed them just with that.

But even then, Mom's Absolute Law was only one.

Don't touch machines.

Even if I think that Mom couldn't place another rule because this single sentence was too harsh in this modern society — too harsh even for that Mom, whose default posture was being raised as a spoiled noble's daughter, pampered by everyone around her and pleading to everyone — so she still couldn't place another one… Even thinking this way, I mean.

For that reason, I renewed my determination and climbed the Kunagisa Castle's stairs. It's not like I received the floor plan, so I only have a vague grasp of it, but from the castle tower's first floor to the top floor… to what Bonbori-san called the castle's top, it seems we'll have to take the spiral course through stairs and corridors. Is it that this whole castle is structured as spiral stairs?

The corridors may be slightly upraising too… Not only the castles, but the buildings in old times in general must be a culture shock for modern people used to honeycomb structured two-by-four constructed buildings with built-in induced heating.

Japanese people and yet being shocked by Japanese culture.

Obviously, there's no elevator or escalator (or rather, the stairs were almost in a ladders' angle. There's no concept of barrier-free. It's just the barrier), so it required a lot of time and endurance for an injured person to go up to the fifth floor which is the top floor (is it a pagoda?).

The determination I renewed ended empty, as it would be impossible for me to reach the top without Bonbori-san's support (you could even call it nursing).

"It may be impertinent of me. but, Jun-sama, do you want me to carry you on my back?"

"Ha-ha-ha."

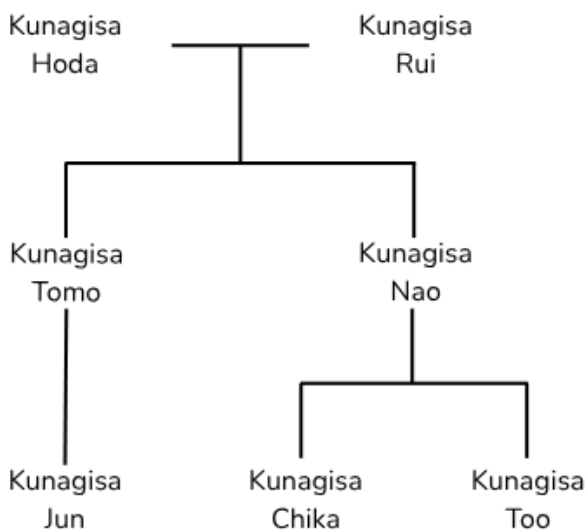
It was an alluring temptation, but my pride didn't allow it, so I firmly refused. These ladders can be quite dangerous to try piggybacking too, and I

couldn't have much pride or do firm refusals after sitting on her back while she crawled, but I didn't wanted this maid, who had not a single drop of sweat on her face while climbing, to think that I was a frail child.

"It makes me gloomy[37]."

I want to show off as her older sister. Well, I'm not her older sister, but as someone older.

…If Dad really is Bonbori-san's dad, things would get complicated, but to gloss over things like my panting and accident after-effects as well, let's picture here how my family tree is. It's long forgotten nowadays, but let's do it to inherit the good old mystery culture.



Like this, right?

Seven Kunagisas, including myself. Well, it's not like I'm going anywhere else with this, but it did serve its purpose of diversion towards my muscular pain happening in real-time. My family has almost no relative socializing, so even if it was inside my head, being able to draw it itself was fun already.

And then, the top.

I mean, we arrived, the top floor of the castle[38].

The apron-dress truly is out-of-place here, but even then, with composed manners that didn't make it stand out, she said:

"Well then, Jun-sama. Please brace yourself."

As if she was about to do a beheading, she sat on her knees and opened the fusuma — it's not like this fusuma could create an impossible locked-room at all, but even then, it did give me the impression of a sturdy forbidden door being opened.

3

"Oh, hi. So you are Tomo's daughter. That is, if times were better, my granddaughter then[39]. I haven't ever imagined before I would meet you in this way. As expected of Humanity's Strongest Contractor, she did a good job. Ah, please feel at home. You don't need to sit in seiza, make yourself comfortable."

Grandpa.

Kunagisa Syndicate's former Head, Kunagisa Rui was sitting in a one-step taller place behind a bamboo blind, as he said that in a large-hearted manner — it's not like I was expecting him to speak in a forced old man style[40], but it was a quite outspoken tone.

It's not because I'm his granddaughter, but I took up his offer and crossed my legs. There are Kendo classes at Sumiyuri School too, so it wasn't like I was bad at sitting in *seiza* position, but I didn't want to place any more burden on my legs which I overused coming to the top floor.

To be honest, I wanted to spread down as I did on the first floor, but doing this here would be relaxing too much.

"To think that Tomo, who I thought that would be a child forever, would give birth to a child, you really don't know what is going to happen, huh. Eer… Your name is Jun, am I right?"

"Yes. Kunagisa Jun. I am a proud shield."

His friendly tone towards someone he first met seemed like a good-natured old man if I had to say it… Although, even then, it sounded a bit young and with will-power too.

I wonder, how old is he? It can be reverse calculated from Mom's true age, though… The noble grandfather's figure was obstructed by the bamboo blind, so the only thing I can guess is that he's sitting cross-legged.

It was like a scene from a historical play, but it also backed up that he

didn't kidnap me here to see his granddaughter's face. While saying that like he finally could meet me, in the same way I can't see him, he probably can't see me too.

There's also the chance of this being a SF bamboo-blind that worked like a magic mirror… But I don't think he would go to this trouble just because of me.

The bamboo-blind is not placed only in front of Grandpa… not only Grandpa Rui.

The Hoda-san at his side, in the elevated place as well, also had a fine bamboo-blind in front of her, so I could only grasp her silhouette.

In contrast to Rui-san, who was talking friendly, Grandma Hoda was:

"……
……
……"

Completely silent.

Is she just quiet, or is she the type to treat her husband with utter respect? However, in both cases, this silence's pressure is just too much.

Even if I couldn't see her silhouette due to the sunlight angle, her silent presence was strong enough to make me perceive that she was sitting there… The Kunagisa Castle's master, huh.

Rather than looking like a too respectful wife, she's actually looking like a partner trying to push the burden of talking with their granddaughter to her partner.

Is the Japanese expression for wife "oku-san" no good nowadays? Reading too many old novels might change my wording and cause it to become outdated… Even in an inner palace like here? What about "oku-sama"? And bewitched?[41]

I don't plan to marry (there's not even the need for me to waste paper space writing that I'm not the type whose dream is becoming someone's wife), so maybe I'm an outsider for this discussion, but *oku-san* being no good and *tsuma* being okay is somewhat weird… The *tsuma* meaning of vegetables in *sashimi* is in the same item for the main meaning in the dictionary if I recall it correctly. But, well, *sashimi* being better than *daikon* is also prejudiced maybe[42].

Either way, I don't have the right of meddling with Grandpa Rui and Grandma Hoda's relationship.

"Nice to meet you… I'm honored to meet you two, Grandpa Rui and Grandma Hoda."

To be fair, I didn't know how to react to the Grandpa Rui with his over-familiar tone and the over-quiet Grandma Hoda, so I took the middle and ended up with this half-baked greeting.

I said I'm honored but, actually, I didn't know their names just a moment ago. Maybe they got confused by me calling them Grandpa and Grandma out of nowhere like that.

It's a difficult sense of distance.

"Well. It's a good voice, it's just like when Tomo was a child. Although it's her only voice I know."

He laughed at it like making fun of it and then:

"Good job too, Bonbori. You can go back now. Please wait outside the room."

He said that to the Bonbori-san who was still well postured sitting in *seiza*.

"Yes. Understood, master."

"Ah, wait. Bonbori-san, please be here with me."

I suddenly held back Bonbori-san who had just bowed to Grandpa Rui on the other side of the bamboo blind. Do I have a tendency of holding back people who are just about to leave?

I'm not good at farewells, huh.

However, unlike when I held back Aunt Jun, this time I was earnest about this. If I end up alone in a place like that, my life might be at risk. And wasn't Bonbori-san the one who hinted at this?

"Er… Wait, even if you say that, Jun-sama. This should be without outsiders—"

"Please. You said to treat me as not being here, didn't you? I got it, you're not here, so please be with me."

While rattling on unreasonable excuses, I grabbed Bonbori-san's skirt strong enough to wrinkle it. It was my strong intent to not let her go no matter what. If you still want to leave, then tear off your skirt and go.

If I knew I would do such a desperate thing to hold her back, perhaps I should have let her carry me piggyback, but my feelings about this are that the debt of me resisting that time should be returned now.

Even if I say so myself, what a selfish thing.

"…Master."

“Fine. No problem. Please be at my granddaughter’s side. It’s not like I will talk about some complicated thing anyway.”

I can only wonder what Bonbori-san was going to say after “master” (maybe it was “Please give your grandchild a word of caution”), but Grandpa Rui said so ahead of her.

And then, he said to Grandma Hoda at his side:

“You don’t mind, right? Mother.”

He calls his wife “mother”? Well, even if Mom was disowned, and even if the eldest son Uncle Nao did a coup d’état and forced him to retire, their parent-child relationship is still active, so that isn’t surprising.

The asked “mother” then replied with:

“……
……
……”

Well, her answer was not answering, so by not saying anything I can think of it being okay then.

Bonbori-san then said “thank you very much” and bowed to them again, and then glared looking down at my direction and said:

“Just this time.”

With a severe look on her face.

Right, it’s nice she opened her heart to me.

While grabbing her skirt (no way I’m letting her go), I turn my eyes to my grandparents again… Well, it’s not like I can see through the bamboo blind by doing that, though.

However, why are they hiding?

With this, even if they had the trouble of meeting me in person, this isn’t much different from a remote call, is it? Actually, it’s worse than a remote call. Because I can’t see their faces. Even if their motive wasn’t seeing their grandchild’s face… Why are they hiding?

Just so they can display their authority, I guess?

This situation does feel a lot like an audience with an important person too… It’s not that I particularly want to steam over this point and say this and that about it, but it’s not like I came here because I wanted to, so it’s not that I wanted to see their faces too, but even then, with them hiding like this, I ended up caring about it.

Like “do they look like Mom?” and also…

What do their hair and eyes look like…

If you just calculate it, they probably passed their 60s, so it’s proper to think their hair is white. Or is it that the blue hair keeps being blue even after aging?

I don’t even know if she married into his family or the opposite… But, if Mom was treated as a “special child”, it may be proper to consider that these two didn’t have a “blue age”.

Since I just saw Too-chan and Chika-chan, my standards got shaken a bit, but, even in the Kunagisa family, the blue hair and blue eyes were a rare case after all.

But it doesn’t really matter. It’s not like I’m going to lose my mind, run through the bamboo blind and go verify my guess.

I won’t, but to say the opposite, these grandparents aren’t particularly caring about me in that sense too.

It’s not like they’re able to verify the color of my hair and eyes through the bamboo blind. Obviously, when they requested Humanity’s Strongest Contractor, they probably got their hands into a photograph of me, though… But since there’s a chance I’m hiding the features that may stand out with things such as hair dye and colored contact lens, they can’t make their decisions without assuring it directly.

So, it’s not like they called me here to assess if, as Kunagisa Tomo’s daughter, Kunagisa Jun was “special” too…

“……

Seriously, what do they want?

I ended up getting quiet by receiving Grandma Hoda’s sudden influence (I couldn’t emit half the pressure though).

I can’t read their intentions at all. And they accepted Bonbori-san here easily, so it’s not like it’s a private matter that can only be discussed between family members…

Dad’s Nonsense Series - No. 28.

Don’t miss their intentions.
Because, even if they look entangled,
Maybe they’re just knitted.

And talking about intentions, there’s another one[43].

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 59.

Life is tied by a red string[44].

As though he seems to be saying a normal thing here, probably, the "tied" he said here is referring to the end of life, or at least is what my literary-brain guess… if "red string" is a word pay with "red intention", then I can't deny feeling a cowardice towards Aunt Jun in Dad's subconsciousness too.

And also, something in his subconsciousness towards the "string-user" as well…

"Well, my grandchild. Here goes the main subject, though."

As I was hesitating in my approach, Grandpa Rui started like that, as if the mood had warmed up enough already.

No, well, if the assumption is that I finally had this chance meeting for the first time after fifteen years, we didn't open up to each other at all, though… Unlike with the maid-san. I didn't hear a single word from Grandma, you know? However, not minding my inner conflicts:

"The fact of this matter, my grandchild. It is an earnest request from your Grandpa."

He continued.

As point-blank as a businessman who works at a scheduled that its time markings break down even to the unit of seconds finds a gap in his lunch to have a meeting in the smoking area.

"I want you to repair the nine artificial satellites that our Syndicate sent to space, you can do it right away, right?"

4

This goes back to roughly twenty years ago.

This is something from long before, from when I was born. A happening not related to me at all. A history before the family bond even gets to exist.

Twenty years from now, Kunagisa Syndicate's direct associate, the "special child" Kunagisa Tomo came back after more than five years since she escaped. The coup d'état against Kunagisa Rui, that was raised by his own son Kunagisa Nao, had been finished behind the scenes, and a chair was prepared for the Blue Savant, who was disowned until then.

Obviously, the top chair for the IT department.

However, as I briefly talked about earlier, this return was for a really short period of time. Somehow, the elder brother Kunagisa Nao brought her back knowing this would happen beforehand from what it seems… Or rather, he raised the coup d'état just to bring his little sister back to the Kunagisa Syndicate for a brief period of time, that's what conforms more to reality, maybe.

The details about this were concealed, but there was a risk of Kunagisa Tomo, a 19-year-old at the time, ending her life-span due to her being special. So maybe that chair was her brother's last gift, or maybe a good memory for the afterlife.

Of course, since I'm alive like this, you can infer that Mom didn't die. That was where Dad's jack of all trades-ness flourished, or this is what I would like to say, but I don't know much about it. What I know for sure is only that, as compensation for saving her life, she ended up quitting her work at Kunagisa Syndicate.

Not a regression, but a diffraction.

This time, it wouldn't be labeled as just her running away from home.

The daughter who had returned, now have lost her blue eyes and blue hair in compensation for her life.

Mom wasn't a "special child" anymore. It's a commonplace saying, and I'm ashamed and embarrassed to say that, but, "the girl was now a woman".

But what must be taken notice of here is not the warm and soft love story between Dad and Mom that I just can't face, it's that Kunagisa Tomo, while for just a brief period of time, did work at Kunagisa Syndicate.

Mom, who was raised like a princess, doesn't give the impression of having worked at all (she committed wrongdoings though[45]), but she did actually contribute to the *economy's flow in society*, even if it was for a short period.

You changed my impressions about you, Mom!

However, this was a problem. A problem for society.

In the few jobs she got her hands on while at the top of the IT department, one of them was launching artificial satellites — 9 satellites launched from the Tanega Island in the Kyuushuu region.

The names were Ichigai, Nishiori, Sanzaka, Shikabane, Gotoride, Rokukase, Shichinona (temporary), Hachikiri, and then, Kunagisa[46].

On paper, they were the space version of cleaning robots, made to observe space debris scattered around the world with a laser sensor and quickly collect them. Not exactly a contribution to society, but rather to space I guess, being passed as AI built-in autopilot drones to environmental conservation.

On paper. Passed as.

As you can guess from these suspicious words, it was only to make the presentation materials for the goal of launching them, and the true goal that the engineer, which is Mom, planned was something different.

Anthropogenic Satellites.

This was the formal name for the nine space drones.

What? Shouldn't it be weather satellites? No, not weather satellites, but anthropogenic satellites. If one knows this truth, maybe they could rather just be named as *Phenomena Satellites*, maybe… Like how the weather satellites observe the weather on Earth's surface, the anthropogenic satellites observe the phenomena caused by human activities.

With extreme-super-ultra-high-altitude-laser sensors, from much above the orbit's trajectory, they would observe not the space debris, but the masses.

Existing satellites like the measurement ones or military ones would be enough to film the Earth's surface, but what Mom wanted wasn't footage to draw a map, and not cooperations in war. It did have these features as options built in, but this was secondary, what she wanted was to measure human flow.

Human flow. Literally the flow of people.

Like how the weather satellites observe changes in clouds, winds, temperature, and precipitation, the anthropogenic satellites would observe the changes in people, people's flow, body temperature, births, and other things.

As we know, even nowadays, in this smartphone society, those values were finally able to be approximated. Before Nationwide Mutual Usage Service IC cards were all around the country — when the importance of big data, the value of personal information, the risks of your location being disclosed were only noticed by a small group of clever, or rather, cunning people at twenty years ago, Mom had placed these measuring devices in outer space where no one could reach.

For the sake of what? Why?

For Mom, there wasn't any solid reason for this, maybe it was her hobby in her remaining time being alive, or maybe her parting gift to Kunagisa Syndicate, that was still doing dishonest things. If the IT department's top-chair was her brother's present to the afterlife, the nine artificial satellites were her parting gift to her elder brother. Although they were far in outer space to be parting gifts[47].

So they were not space debris, not World Heritages, but rather, her space heritage, I guess. In any case, Mom survived after this, following her fight against illness, so it's kind of a sloppy story.

After this, Mom left the Kunagisa Syndicate once for all and married Dad,

but the artificial satellites in space remained floating out in double-meaning, operating openly and covertly, mixed with the starry sky.

How people gathered in places, moved across the time, what they wanted, from what they fled, who they met with, who they gathered around, from what place they scattered, to where they returned, at what speed they advanced, in which house they stayed, in what hospital they were admitted, who they lived with, who they died with. It would turn all of this to databases, algorithms and use them as they liked, as if it were a streaming subscription.

Because their highly sensitive lasers could detect not only people deep in the mountains or inside buildings, but actually the ones hiding in underground bomb shelters as well, it watched over humanity from all around the globe. Even if they didn't have phones, even if they didn't have GPS devices, if they *looked like humans*, those satellites would detect them.

If you say it in terms of novels, it was like an omniscient narration of the whole world.

It had much more risks than military satellites, and possessed much more applications than weather satellites… And not only that, but the AI was automatic and perfectly autonomous. There weren't any paradoxes in this autonomous driving which used space debris as its energy fuel.

In this period of about twenty years, there's no doubt the nine satellites left by Mom amplified the already extraordinary controlling power possessed by the Kunagisa Syndicate.

It could be used for both good and wrong deeds.

And for money-making above everything.

Because long before the observation balloons sent by other companies or by the government could cautiously gather the world's voices, they launched the human flow observation satellites, which gathered every single unvoiced opinion from all humanity. The only thing, even if trivial, was the legal part of it, but using the fear of the *observer effect* preventing the output of accurate answers as their reason, they finally could launch the on-paper space debris cleaner. This was the lacking in ethics proposal made by the mad scientist, Mom.

You're really impressive, huh, Mom.

Well, the Kunagisa Syndicate is more on the side of the organizations that establish the law, so it wasn't much of a problem, it seems. It can be approved as much as they want. Great, that's great.

That's why, as a matter of fact, there weren't any problems about it. No problems happened after they were launched, either. Not once in these twenty years. However, the solution for the autonomous driving paradox was a tremendous signal-jamming to those contradiction-free artificial satellites.

Their lifespans over the *time degradation* had come.

The death of the nine heavenly bodies — strictly saying, it's not like everything died, but it seems not even half of them are still working properly. The received data is messy, the accuracy had fallen, the certainty started lacking, and the algorithms stopped reaching proper answers.

For the time being, the bugs and text corruptions can still be repaired by the analysts, but the end is near.

First of all, the old technologies from twenty years ago being able to actively operate even now is extremely astonishing. The Kunagisa Synicate's bonus time had come to an end, and the heritage left by the absconded daughter will thus end its operations this year.

"Well, that was the opinion of the specialists committee, but I think there's still time before giving up. If we perform precise maintenance in it, its operations can still be prolonged for a long time."

Grandpa Rui explained the overview of the situation surrounding the artificial satellites to me, who didn't know anything about it, and then said his first words one more time.

"That's why, my grandchild. Please repair them. The satellites that Tomo, your mother, built. The needed materials can all be provided here. If you say you need manpower, we can provide a number of people too."

Jaw-dropping.

So this is having your mouth left open… To the extent that this time I even felt really grateful that the bamboo blinds obstructed us so we couldn't see each other.

The grandparents I met here for the first time would've seen my stupid face.

My hand grabbing Bonbori-san's skirt held it even stronger. If I had superhuman strength, it would have been torn by now.

Seriously?

Is this old man really giving a business talk to his 15-year-old grandchild?

No, I get it. I totally understand.

It's a serious problem that not only the Kunagisa Syndicate carries, not only the IT enterprises carry, but most of society and organizations carry… They say any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic, but the systems adopted by the main part of the economic activities can't be understood from anyone besides their specific experts, can't even be imprudently touched, so, although it seems like a funny story, it can actually happen.

Since the maintenance and updates for an outsourced program can't be handled by the employees in some cases, or maybe because anyone besides the developers can't understand its core parts even, the only way is to keep paying a probably highly priced request to the same specific company.

You may think that there's no problem in that, but then, this could stop healthy competition in the business world, and it also might be violating antitrust laws and other regulations. Even without such violations, it could ultimately hinder technological progress itself…

Knowing how Mom was amazing, as her daughter, it can even make me feel a thrilling pleasure, but, seriously, to think that the artificial satellites she built twenty years ago as an hobby in her spare time from her main work are still operating now, and still being needed, this itself seems bizarre, and it can be also called as unhealthy, I think.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 93.

Let go of what you cannot repair.
Even if it is your heart.

I am seriously saying this too, but we use a lot of things we can't not only repair, but also that we don't even understand how it works… Things like "I can't even imagine how people lived their lives before smartphones became popular" are often said, but isn't this something extremely dangerous happening? On the other hand, if humanity before smartphones could have predicted this future, wouldn't they probably try to avoid it at all costs?

Anyway, there's no turning back.

It's not like we're all going to stop using the internet just because we kinda have this feeling of not quite understanding these technologies. Just as we're not simply going to get rid of all the nuclear weapons we have.

We can' let it go, Dad.

That's why I can get it. I do, as an understanding daughter, and as the Blue Savant's daughter.

There's no way the Kunagisa Syndicate is letting go of the privilege of grasping all humanity detailed trends, of this ultimate unequal treaty. They want to keep the status quo no matter what. If anything, they may want to change this crisis into an opportunity. If someone suggested, even as a joke, to move to plan B because the satellites don't seem to be working that well, they won't only be fired, but rather, even their third generation may end up living in the streets.

And also, no matter how exceptional the Kunagisa Syndicate is, they can't raise another project using a similar algorithm and building it in other ways. No matter what one says, it can't be denied that it's precisely because the

satellites were launched a long time ago that their operation was allowed… The reason for Aunt Jun's monster car being allowed to run in the public roads without having seatbelts is precisely because it's an older type of car. When I think about it calmly, I can't get why it's okay for it to don't have seatbelts, and the only thing I can say is that the Road Traffic Act is entangled right now.

And the most important matter furthermore is that the engineer and hacker who was the IT department's top at that time, Kunagisa Tomo, even she couldn't repair the deteriorated artificial satellites.

A lot of time has passed since Mom retired.

Or you may rather say that she aged even more than the artificial satellites. Fortunately, Mom aged. She stopped being a "special child" and became an adult.

She accomplished the "after 20 years old, a genius is just a person". That's why her digital literacy hasn't been updated. Ironically, Mom, who was the engineer, now is the one who can't keep with today's technologies.

And my grandparents know this very well too.

And it's precisely because they know this, that they called me.

"I've heard of it, my grandchild. My daughter, your mom, she forbade you to touch machines, didn't she?"

"…Yes."

I ended up replying. I couldn't take the silence. Or rather, this situation. This situation that felt like a stress interview.

A family happy meeting? No way.

This isn't a meeting, but a consultation.

"I knew it, I knew it. Just as what was previously reported."

"Just like the hackers who committed serious crimes are forbidden to touch computers after their time in prison or the probation period. I know that you're not just an ordinary person. You're my grandchild after all. And also, Tomo's daughter."

"……"

Mom's absolute law.

Don't touch machines.

"This irregularity was originally supposed to be dealt with by my daughter, but if she can't do it, the karma from a parent must reflect on their

child. No, actually, I don't mind at all if you cooperate with your mother, though. Obviously, this isn't a bad matter for you, you know? If you succeed at doing the maintenance of at least one artificial satellite, rewards will be bounced up to you, just like a moonsault. You can choose whatever college you want to go without having to rely on student loans, or, on the other hand, you could also live your whole life just doing whatever you want."

Ha-ha-ha.

This isn't just a New Year's gift, right.

Aah, what in the world.

So this was a job hunt, then… Not a connection between grandparents and grandchild who have been separated due to messy situations for a long time.

I wasn't expecting at all a TV drama scene where we would hug while shredding tears out of deep emotions, but this isn't The Village of Eight Graves nor The Inugami Family.

To think it was a business drama.

I wouldn't think even for a split second that, by being called to this World Heritage, they would tell me this splendid corporate vision… It feels like I ended up entering the onboarding meeting although I don't even remember filling the application form.

Or would it be a customer center?

Am I receiving complaints regarding Mom's work?

To think of it, after Grandpa Rui confirmed my name like in the beginning of that interview, he didn't mention it again. As implying that it wasn't that important. He just appealed to the personal circumstance of me being his grandchild. Also, he casually saying that he wanted to ask it for Mom at first scares me too.

As they were taking this as an opportunity to make the daughter that confronted them, fled their home, eloped and then fled again to work at the Kunagisa Syndicate again… Perhaps these people don't know the meaning of "disowning"?

"……
……
……"

Grandma Hoda stayed silent all this time… She didn't back her husband's sayings or tried saying it in other words.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 61

Being silent is the same as approving.

Or rather, the same as being dead.

"I am aware that this is a sudden request, please take your time considering it. Meanwhile, we will prepare a formal contract. Do you have your seal with you now? Well, I think your answer has been decided already, though."

"… My decision is already made, in fact. I don't even need to think about it."

The part about the seal may be a joke, but I said that, without being silent. I was still grabbing Bonbori-san's skirt, but I looked straight to Grandpa Rui at the other side of the bamboo blind and said:

"I won't do it. I can't do it. I can't touch it."

"…?"

Even if it was only a silhouette, I saw that Grandpa Rui tilted his head. Due to his position, maybe he isn't used to this… To get his, the Honorary Syndicate Head's proposed conditions declined.

To this situation of his order being defied.

If he's like that even after his son did that coup d'état against him, really, people just don't change…

I had this thought, like a thought that gods who watched over humanity for a long, long time would have. In fact, what was watching over humanity for a long time was the nine anthropogenic satellites built by Mom.

"You're probably misunderstanding it, Grandpa Rui, and Grandma Hoda too, probably. Unlike Mom, unlike teenage Mom, I don't have any expertise in computers. I'm not a "special child", you know?"

"As you can see from my hair and eyes", was what I wanted to say, but, right, he can't see it because of the bamboo blind… Or maybe his farsighted glasses were foggy.

"They say 'like father, like son', but the children of 'special children' aren't always 'special children'. Or rather, I'm not like the famous people's children who can also get famous. Mom isn't forbidding me to touch machines because I'm an outstanding hacker, she just doesn't want me to make the same mistakes she did."

Mom strayed from her path in her teens.

She formed the "Team" by using computers and gathering allies and did pretty much all the bad things one could do in the digital world. Even if there were many things not regulated due to law not catching up with the new technology at the time, her activities probably weren't based on ethical social

contributions that were placed above any political parties.

“If you look at it fairly, teenage Mom was a full-fledged wicked person, and that’s why she kept her only daughter away from machines. To not let her daughter be corrupted by evil.”

She kept me away from computers, from workstations, from cellphones, from tablets, from apps, from high-tech cars, from smart-speakers, from TVs, from mainframes, from digital money, from touch panels, from airplanes, from e-book readers, from Walkmans, from particle accelerators, from online shopping, from hard disk recorders, from crystal radios, from Playstations, from motherboards, from DeskTop Music, from Apple watches, from cyclocomputers, from 3D printers, from bluetooth, from aerial photography drones, from rice cookers, from automatic doors, from video mapping, from vending machines with built-in cameras, from AI built-in reception robots.

And she kept me away from spaceships, too.

As a woman obsessed with the education of her children who was overly sensitive to sex education, as keeping her beloved daughter away from porn, she kept me away from every single machine.

Because she doesn’t want me to make the same mistakes.

There was a time when I was forbidden to touch everything made with metals, but Dad said that that was definitely going too far and would interfere with daily life, so after an argument with him, she settled on a compromise. Well, it was a compromise plan which at least settled with allowing something like me getting in an old classic car.

“I’m sorry to say that, but your grandchild is an extremely ordinary person. And I’m proud about that from the bottom of my heart, because I feel I’m walking on the right path. Because I’m a girl with no redeeming qualities, who can be found anywhere.”

That’s why I decline it. Even if they get me a large amount of money.

Even if they threaten my life.

It’s not like I’m being especially stubborn in closely following Mom’s Absolute Law. And, even if I had the skills to fix the super surveillance camera that now is a piece of junk, this is a time where I must firmly refuse it.

“If I had to say it, the nine artificial satellites were Mom’s last job, and like the culmination of all her illegal wrongdoings. Not dealing with the repair is the only contribution I can do to her as her daughter.”

“Well, if you excuse me then, Grandpa Rui, Grandma Hoda. I don’t really feel happy about being able to meet with you two, but I will say that anyway. If it’s not about something like this, please contact me at any time, although I don’t have a phone. Although unasked for, if you let me give one advice, it would be better to let things as they are now, without any unnecessary

meddling. Or else, you could do something like blowing them with nuclear missiles. And with that, there will be one less nuclear weapon in the world, too… Because if you guys keep sticking rashly with that, no good things will happen, probably."

As I said that, I stood up using Bonbori-san's skirt as a handhold. Thankfully, I wasn't sitting in *seiza*, but rather with my legs crossed.

Because if my feet aren't numb, I can leave right away.

My feet aren't. Neither my brain.

First Day (4) –
The Village of Nine Graves

First Day (4) - The Village of Nine Graves[48]

0

Attack is the best form of defeat.
Especially a preemptive attack.

(Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 11)

1

I calmly left Kunagisa Castle after giving my grandparents a piece of my mind since they tried to invite their grandchild, whom they hadn't seen once in 15 years, to join their corporation as a business partner and, following that, I came back home to Kyoto after getting on the limited express, and then complained to Dad and Mom saying "hey listen, I've had such a bad time, mostly because of Mom" — if these were the events to be portrayed in this chapter, this could've been a sitcom on its own, but as most of you expected, this didn't happen. First of all, I can't get on the limited express. Or on the Shinkansen either. If it were a trolley at least, but trains nowadays have computers in them, so… Since I'm not the one operating them, one could deem as safe if I wasn't in the first car, so it's a gray zone where I can't say I've never sneakily hopped on one somewhere Mom couldn't see, but I can't use it when I'm going back home.

Therefore, I was now in Kunagisa Castle's underground prison.

Prison. Really?

Is there a facility like this in it? In a World Heritage site?

No, actually, to defend the honor of Grandpa Rui, who is a businessman even though he's almost retired by now, it's not like they sent their granddaughter to an underground jail because she did the crime of going against her superiors and family. Not at all.

I've heard from a friend of both Dad and Mom that, a long time ago, they got locked up in a secret laboratory's jail (it seems this friend was locked with them too), but, in this case, I'm now relaxing in this prison by my own will.

Just like Kuujou Joutarou did.

I'll explain it from start to end. Precisely as Kunagisa Jun[49].

If this were a movie, it wouldn't be surprising if the youngster who flatly refused the invitation from a haughty old man suddenly had to get back home in the next scene. However, there's no such convenient system as scene changes in the real world.

Reality continues without any gaps. Even during sleep.

After my extremely rude reply, what Grandpa Rui actually said was:

“Well, well, don’t rush your conclusions like that, my grandchild. It is good being young, isn’t it? After all, you seem to be injured for some reason — you must think you are standing sharply, but you are staggering, you know? — take this opportunity to rest at your own pace. It’s okay for the discussion to be another time, right? You probably want to see the detailed documentation as well. Bonbori, please provide my grandchild with a meal, a bath, and a bed. And a change of clothes too.”

He didn’t seem to be offended. He said it as if he were calming a child’s temper and ordered that to Bonbori-san without waiting for my reaction.

“Understood, master. I shall handle it so nothing is overlooked.”

Since Bonbori-san ended up agreeing with it, I couldn’t leave the castle anymore — Bonbori-san is the one that I unreasonably asked to stay here with me after all.

I can’t waste her composed face.

I see, you’re good at it, huh, former Syndicate Head.

I could say that this point of him was more like a politician’s skill than one of an entrepreneur or a businessman who can work for 24 hours…

Although I clearly refused it, he elusively dodged it.

The youngster’s opinion wasn’t approved.

Well, I don’t think that he allowed Bonbori-san to stay because of this, but it’s a politician-ness that can even make me doubt if this wasn’t the case. Even if it’s not the case, after grabbing her skirt with all my strength, it’s hard for me to say “I don’t care about what will become of your apprentice maid evaluation, it’s not my problem”.

It’s hard for this gentle me.

And although it feels really shameful, it’s true that my wounds aren’t completely healed yet. Well, it’s expected, not even half a day has passed since I was run over by a completely red supercar.

If it’s okay for me to lie down, I will. I want to lie down sprawled out.

At least, with how my body is right now, going back to Kyoto walking it’s impossible, unless you’re Inou Tadataka.

“So then, see you another day. In a good meeting and when your physical condition is good as well. There’s no need to be modest, if you think about it calmly, you will see that listening to my request is the best choice. We will be

analyzing the reward at our side too. Excelsior!"

A Marvel fan? If I knew it beforehand, maybe we could've had a different conversation. Well, no, maybe he just ended up knowing that one of my biggest desired employers is Marvel by the beforehand investigation. Just like he knew that Mom told me to not touch machines.

Perhaps he's a fan of the coffee shop too… But even then, the most important thing wasn't investigated.

Unlike Mom, I'm not a machine expert, and that's not the reason why she forbade me to touch machines, and although I said it that much clearly, he didn't get it.

Modesty? Well, I truly am a humble person, but I wouldn't say that I can't do something I can. However, I couldn't get myself to repeat that "I'm a defective product worse than Mom".

To the grandparent who wanted to bribe his grandchild.

And that's why the argument didn't flare up again, and my meeting through a bamboo-blind ended up without any emotional hugs or air kisses.

It ended in incomprehension.

I can't say it has a good aftertaste, but at least it wasn't like Grandpa Rui and Grandma Hoda (who kept silent to the very end) ordered Bonbori-san to throw their grandchild into a prison cell.

The guest room was prepared beforehand on the third floor of Kunagisa Castle. The meals, changes of clothes, and the bed, were all also arranged in a high-class *ryokan* style. Is it that the maid-san is really good, or was all of this planned from the beginning?

In other words, did they intend to not let me leave until I said yes…? For how many days do they plan to fully book this World Heritage?

For the whole summer vacation?

"Well then, have a good night, Jun-sama. I will be staying nearby, so if you require anything, please ring the bell at your side and call me."

Bonbori-san said that after she wrapped clean bandages around my wounds, which were still at the first-aid treatment level, right after I bathed, and then she bowed to me and left my room. It was still too early to say good night, but the electric infrastructure in this historical building wasn't fully equipped. I couldn't ask for ceiling lights.

That said, I can't exactly light candles with pine resin inside a World Heritage like its old customs. If even Aikawa Jun stepped aside and avoided destroying this place, there's no way I can turn one of the few remaining castle towers to ashes. As a Kyoto citizen, I may get blamed for not wanting to make

it like Nijou Castle, but our feelings of respect for history don't lose to any other prefecture in Japan.

Note: except for the Nara and Saga prefectures.

Well, although I can burn this place to escape as a last resort, it doesn't feel like I need to escape from here, no matter what. There doesn't seem to be any danger to my life… On the other hand, what could risk my life is acting recklessly while fully wounded like this. It should be better to wait and recover, not all the way until I'm fully recovered, but at least until I can stand and walk by myself.

Good grief, Aunt Jun.

You can't justify a traffic accident with it being a gag.

And after this and that, I went to bed, but I couldn't sleep properly. I don't think I am a delicate person to the extent of not sleeping if it's a different pillow (I couldn't share a room in the dormitory if that were the case), but maybe it's that this too high-class guest room conversely makes me less relaxed, or maybe it's because of the sutures' aching.

Or maybe it's because of the full-fledged wound.

The one in the heart, where I can't stitch it up.

Although I acted brave and like it was impossible, maybe I was yearning for some emotional encounter with my grandparents? And is this the shock of my wish being betrayed?

Although it's obvious that Mom's parents would be about that.

It actually was better than the worst case I imagined. Though saying the worst would've been better is a kind of luxury, indeed.

"…I guess I should take a walk."

I thought about ringing the bell to call the maid-san, and then let her play Shouhai Mighty[50] with me until I get sleepy, but I don't know if there are mahjong tiles in this castle (it may have *hanafuda*, but I don't know the rules), and getting one more member at this time would be difficult too.

Then I should do something a high-schooler would do, like exploring a World Heritage. If you think about mystery books, although family trees are usual too, something even more expected of them is having floor plans. If I got a physical trick using a castle's structure to work, I would win an Edogawa Ranpo prize, for sure.

I could even be nominated for a Japan Booksellers' Award, maybe.

Let's use this as a theme for the summer vacation's social studies report, that could fit just right… A field work at a World Heritage site.

Walking at night.

Or even if I say that, the top floor is where “master and her wife” are, so the exploration route needs to be on the floors below that… Is it bad if I exit the castle tower? Would perhaps a castle garrison holding a *sasumata* capture me? I don’t know if there are any, though.

As I couldn’t win the intellectual curiosity I inherited from Dad, or actually just as a way of killing time, I left the guest room at the Kunagisa Castle’s third floor while wearing the under-kimono-like clothes they gave me, and went on a study trip walking on my tiptoes — which ultimately ended with me reaching this underground prison.

A room made of stone with a wooden fence in grid form. Is it okay to call it a room? It actually looks like a cave… Or actually, a niche’s architecture.

Niche… Blue eyes[51]?

Like small rooms made to hide warriors. I was surprised when I discovered several of these prison cells inside the castle, but to think they actually exist… I knew this type of facility from historical novels, but when I get to see the real thing, I’m sorry, but it creeps me out a bit…

There’s no light at all in this underground (well, if there were actually no light at all, I wouldn’t be able to see it like this, so, in reality, there is a bit of lighting coming from the gaps between the stone walls, though), so that must be why I’m feeling like this, but even a high-security prison must have a bit more of hospitality.

And all the more when compared to the guest room I was just a moment ago… Large latches were installed in the prison bars, but they weren’t locked.

If this was a digital lock controlled by a computer, even then, I couldn’t lay a finger on it, but Mom wouldn’t be raising her eyebrows at me for sliding a wooden latch.

She wouldn’t do it with her odd right eye nor with her left eye.

I pulled the prison door and entered the cell.

To enter such an ominous jail by my own will, come to think of it, it seems like an action an insane person would do, but, for some reason, it felt natural for me.

It’s a place that creeps me out, but even then, for some reason, it felt better than the guest room on the third floor.

Is this maybe Dad’s influence too?

He often said that he slept best in small places. He said things like that in his college years he lived in a 6.48 m^2 apartment, or like when he was invited to a wealthy mansion and, even then, asked to sleep in a storage room.

What a weird Dad. And I'm a weird daughter.

There's no chair or a maid-san who could become one, so I sat down on the cell's floor, or actually, it was more like ground. My waist feels cold with this thin *juban*, but it felt good since it was like my bruises were getting cooled down. If it was winter I could freeze to death in this wicked environment, but if it's summer — well, if it was daylight I would be baked maybe. However, I don't need to worry about the sun hitting here for a while.

I shall sleep here tonight.

I decided that like it was obvious. As I lowered my back, my feelings calmed down too — I thought I might have good dreams.

2

"Did you refuse Grandpa's offer, Hii-sama[52]?"

More than an obsolete word resulting from this time, place, and occasion, it was a dead word, even considering this castle's insides, so being called by it gave me no choice but waking up… That is to say, I was woken up in the first step of sleep, so this small-minded me unintentionally ended up glaring at the voice's direction — at the other side of the fence —, but when I recognized this person, I completely woke up.

My sleepiness was blown off.

Anyway, it was because of my memories of the sleepy middle school times, when I would often be roused out of bed by Mom after oversleeping — of course, the one that was standing up there like a warder, or rather, like a prison guard, wasn't Mom.

It wasn't Kunagisa Tomo.

It was Kunagisa Too.

…It's Kunagisa Too, right?

The blue long hair that looked like the second player character color version of Big Bird from Sesame's Street… Even if it was dark underground, this blue seemed like it was shining by itself and it glowed well.

So as the blue eyes staring at me.

It's like the carnivorous animals with eyes that shine in the dark.

"Hello, Too-chan… I couldn't properly greet you at noon. You couldn't sleep too? However, aren't you mistaking me for someone else? "Hii-sama"… I'm—"

“Kunagisa Jun. A proud shield, right?”

She got ahead of me.

What am I supposed to do in cases like this, Dad?

“I am Kunagisa Too. Someone far away from Kunagisa Tomo”

“…Oh no.”

Did she say that with those blue eyes and blue hair in front of me? What if this black-haired black-eyed girl who can’t touch machines gets hurt? Even more hurt.

“Eh? Is Chika-chan the one closest to Kunagisa Tomo, then?”

“Yeah, well. She may be closer than me.”

She evaluated her twin sister like this, with a sullen face — it makes sense. By talking to her like this, it feels like her personality isn’t like Mom’s.

I’ve heard when Mom had blue hair and blue eyes her personality was quite friendly… It seems that exaggerated sociability it’s a type of miscommunication as well, but I also feel something from the Too-chan at the other side of the jail that I would never feel from Mom.

Hostility.

Or something like it.

“However, Chika is not Kunagisa Tomo by any means too, Hii-sama.”

“……”

“Being close means it’s different. Even if raised the same way, they won’t end up the same. And I also hear that Kunagisa Tomo at 13 years old was smaller than her too.”

Now that she said it, and by looking at her, she didn’t seem as small as my first impression of her. Wait, is there a chance that, although a 13-year-old, she’s taller than me? She doesn’t seem like she would get caught on the height limitation for amusements, at least.

It’s the same as the perspective trick in this castle, that when you see it up close, its size is surprisingly overwhelming.

If that’s so for Too-chan, it must be so for Chika-chan as well.

“That’s why, essentially, Kunagisa Chika’s ‘Chika’ isn’t the one from ‘close’. But rather the ‘close’ from ‘close-relative hatred’, I guess. Or rather, the one from ‘incest’, maybe[53].”

Is this perhaps a joke between these twin sisters, because Chika-chan who

was pouting had now chuckled. By laughing like this, she did look like a 13-year-old, letting aside the height comparisons.

At least she probably isn't a 19-year-old, I guess.

Although, as an only-child, I couldn't laugh about it.

"It seems that our father wanted to love us like she loved his sister, but unfortunately, even with designer baby technology, this is about the limit for what it was thirteen years ago. And the nutrition conditions between now and then were different too… There's also the fact that we, who were raised in this Kunagisa Syndicate, couldn't have that unbalanced diet that Kunagisa Tomo had. Although, if Kunagisa Tomo, who is the equivalent of our aunt, continued living in the Syndicate longer, even thirteen years ago, a more precise clone could've been possible, I guess."

Too-chan continued talking with a smile on her face, but I couldn't laugh about it. Designer baby? Clone? From what SF novel are those things?

Close-relative hatred. Incest.

"I'm just kidding, of course. To you at least, Hii-sama. And besides, the nomenclature for us twins shouldn't be designer babies, but rather, engineering babies; not human clones, but rather, human drones."

"I've also got in this prison as if I was in autopilot" — she said, while looking at her surroundings. Does this place feel strange to her as well? Even if she's wearing that twelve-layered kimono that fits her well, I don't think that she lives in this castle at all.

……Then, why were they called?

Uncle Nao and his two daughters, to this castle.

In other words, invited to seats at my preparatory meeting.

"…Isn't Chika-chan with you?"

"She's sleeping in the watchtower. It's not like we're always together just because we're twins. Although we do act like that in front of our father. 'Too-chan and Chika-chan. And when we're together, a full-fledged Kunagisa Tomo'."

"…The Kunagisa Tomo from *long ago*, right?"

"Things like the olden times, the past, the boys-and-girls' period, they're not that easy to cut off. The launching of anthropogenic satellites that can make one grasp all humanity in their own hands isn't something you can pass as just youthful enthusiasm."

It's like a veteran *mangaka* who is always talked about because of his first work — she said with a nasty quip.

Is the fact that I aspire to become a manga editor that much spread around here?

“That’s why I’m thoroughly imitating the Blue Savant Kunagisa Tomo, not the child raising Mom one. Her famous work, I mean. And as for Chika, she’s like a dead copy of her “Dead Blue” indies era. Uni～”

Yeah, yeah.

That’s right, as one could expect, Mom isn’t saying things like “uni”, “uni～” or “uni-” anymore, after crossing her forties. Dad tried pushing me to say it when I was a kindergartener, but I firmly refused it. That was our family’s first child abuse now that I think of it.

I ended up remembering something unpleasant.

“Indeed. My father is still calling himself “this noble me” and things like that, though. As her daughter, that thing is ultra embarrassing.”

He was saying these things, indeed.

He called me “my noble niece” too. Let’s put it aside for himself, he calling me noble was his consideration towards his sister, I guess.

“By the way, can I help you with anything, my noble uncle’s noble Too-chan? I want to get along with the cousins that I didn’t know existed by all means too, but, no matter how one thinks about it, don’t you feel it’s better for us to alter the time and place to do it? Let’s spread out a mat at the Sannomaru Plaza, so we three can play Shouhai Mighty together.”

“‘No matter how one thinks about it’? I don’t want to receive instructions from you when it comes to thinking, Hii-sama. Or should I say Onee-sama? Saying that while being someone who lived for fifteen years without thinking about anything.”

You’re harsh, aren’t you?

Maybe I should ring the bell and call the maid-san so she can save me. Aah, I can’t, I left that bell in the guest room. And even if I had it with me, I don’t think its sound coming from this underground prison would reach her.

“I’m saying this because I want to share the struggles with you, Too-chan, but living as Kunagisa Tomo’s daughter for fifteen years isn’t easy enough to do without thinking, you know? When it comes to not looking like Mom, I’m above both you and Chika-chan.”

I don’t think there’s meaning in placing superiority and inferiority in not looking like her, but if that’s a race, then I’m the top 1 by very far.

It’s about Aunt Jun only, that said I looked like her.

And also, that person probably said that half-mindedly.

“I wonder if that is the case, Hii-sama?”

“Please stop with this Hii-sama thing. Although I’m called Jun-chan or Tate-chin by my roommates. These are both mahjong *yakus*, so they also happen to combine[54]—”

“You are Kunagisa Tomo’s daughter. The apples of their eyes. A precious, precious princess. You entering this prison cell peacefully, without anyone telling you to, as if it was natural, is a good proof of it.”

While I was swallowing the emptiness of trying to invite someone who doesn’t have interest in mahjong, I suddenly thought, “wait, what?”. Is she talking about why did I enter this prison by myself, without being asked by anyone to do it? If she has a clue about the reason for that, I certainly would like her to tell me, you know?

“Eh? wait a minute, you’re kidding right? Did you really put yourself inside this cell without knowing anything?”

“Yes, seriously.”

“…Then, don’t you know that your mother and our aunt, Kunagisa Tomo, lived locked up in this cell from when she was born up to when she was 10 years old?”

3

I didn’t. I’ve never heard about it.

I’ve heard her youth’s heroic tales from Dad, and mixtures of fact and fiction from their friends, but it’s the first time I’ve heard about an episode like this — I’ve never heard of something that resembled it, even.

However, it was difficult for me to accuse Too-chan of lying based on that. Especially when I’m sitting in this cell, almost as if it’s inside a mother’s uterus, and feeling peaceful, or even before that, when I reached this underground as if I was being led to come here… Thinking that this space is a niche unrelated to Mom is what is really unreasonable.

Niche… Blue eyes[51]…

And besides, it also explains why I was here before I realized. Because only family members would know of it — if it was true, that is. In my whole life, secluded from the Kunagisa family, there was no way for me to know what happened in this closed room. A household violence, a civil affair that police couldn’t interfere, or rather, a castlehold violence.

Kunagisa Castle’s master — Kunagisa Hoda.

My grandmother and Mom's mother.

"……"

As impressive as it may sound — unlike that troubled experience of listening to the fake news about Dad being the maid-san's father —, although I was surprised, it felt like some part of me ended up accepting this absurd information easily.

I don't feel the urge to go against it.

Even after hearing that this prison was recently — in a historical perspective — used, I don't get from this fact the feeling of wanting to stand up by reflex, like if I touched something filthy, at all.

I completely thought that calming down in a small room was Dad's genes… but, well, it makes sense, just like Too-chan said.

I'm truly Kunagisa Tomo's daughter, I guess.

Even if my hair and eyes are black, even if I can't touch machines.

"…Putting that aside, 'what can I help you', I think I asked that about a hundred times, right? I'm sorry if my question is being repeated, but, as you can see, I'm a wounded person."

"'Putting that aside' amazes me. Hii-sama, didn't you start wanting to carefully dig down into your own mother's confinement livelihood?"

"When I get back home in a couple days, I will indirectly try to ask Mom herself about it. If she's in a good mood, I think she will tell me about it… More importantly, if I was led to here because of Mom's genes, then I'm interested in why you came here, Too-chan. It's due to Mom's genes too after all?"

"As you might have guessed, it was Grandfather's suggestion."

I thought she would put on airs a bit more, but so she said. Although she's going through the required steps, unlike "Grandfather", who went straight to the main subject. We got excited by having fun talking about our common acquaintances and our introductions.

"Your guest room was completely empty, so it was guessed that you'd be here, and then I came up. More precisely, it may be Father's suggestion, since he partook in dinner along with Grandfather, I guess."

In other words, it was Uncle Nao's suggestion, then.

It may sound idyllic when I say Uncle Nao, but it means it was the Kunagisa Syndicate Head's suggestion… To those relatives gather even if it's not New Year's, it might be in order to think about their next steps after they couldn't persuade me in their first try.

They sure went out of their way just for a third-rate person like me.

Trying to discuss with an injured person after waking her up just when she was about to fall asleep was a clever tactic as well. Talking about tactics, was this expression used for attacking a castle's rear entrance if I recall it correctly? [55]

"You teased him, right, Hii-sama? That was the right answer. To sell yourself at a high price to Grandfather. Because, as for me, while I was obediently saying yes to those adults trying to make them like me, I ended up taking this gofer-like role."

"Take a good look at me, with those blue eyes. Do I look like a carrier-woman who could lickety-split fix the satellites?"

"Uni. To be fair you don't look like it."

"I'm saying this seriously, too. Just as you can see, I'm an ordinary high school girl with no redeeming features that can be found anywhere."

"You don't look like a high school girl either. You look like a town girl who was taken prisoner wearing a *juban*."

"Thank you."

"But, you know, there was a reality show with a town girl using craftsmanship skills to fly a spaceship."

"…Backstreet workshop?"

"Yes, this one."

"No, that's not what I wanted to say" — Too-chan said.

If she isn't playing stupid, her sense of humor has a promising future. I ended up picturing it and almost laughed at this high-pressure situation.

"However, the fact that appearances don't match what's inside can be proven by the existence of us sisters, Hii-sama. It's not like everyone with blue hair and blue eyes can be Kunagisa Tomo. There's no other way rather than keep living and disappointing the ones around you."

"Please stop saying this self-deprecating joke. For me, both you and Chika-chan look like "special children"."

"Thank you very much. Did you say that not touching machines wasn't because of excellent skills, but was actually just your mother's education policy?"

My compliments were quickly dismissed.

Even though I said that seriously.

“That’s right. That’s why my digital literacy is actually far below an average 15-year-old girl. After all, I’ve never touched a machine since I was old enough to understand things.”

“Never.”

“…Don’t nitpick. Careless mistakes happen, you know. There’s some stuff that surprisingly has computers sneakily equipped in it. Things like plushies. And also, there are some things that are simply unavoidable. That’s why what I meant is that I’ve never willingly touched a machine.”

“No, what I was nitpicking wasn’t that. I wonder, how can you assert that you don’t have digital literacy if you’ve never touched a machine?”

“You can’t know that unless you try, can you?” — Too-chan aid.

“No… I mean…”

I tried to say I can assert it, but I lost my words. If there’s a logic that says that someone who has never touched machines could not fix the artificial satellites, then there’s also a logic in which someone who has never touched machines is not necessarily incapable of fixing the satellites.

Since there’s no proof of not being able to do it.

No, no. Why am I letting myself be talked into it?

Where in the world is the person that would say “don’t having wings doesn’t mean one can’t fly” and then jump off a building?

Even if someone like this existed, this guy would probably stop existing soon.

“You didn’t test yourself, did you? On the other hand, Chika and I had already proved our incapacity.”

“…Proof? How?”

“We failed the remote-controlled maintenance of the satellites.”

I carelessly asked that as an interjection, and she immediately replied… And with an answer that I didn’t want to know, too.

It made things awkward.

“Then, was I called here as the second act following you and Chika-chan?”

“It’s fine, Hii-sama. You don’t need to choose your words. You can clearly say you were called to clean the mess caused by our preliminary tries.”

She said that shrugging her shoulders and then nodded saying:

“Uni. It’s mostly that.”

So, these were the particulars about this hostility I'm feeling continuously… So it was because of this connection. For those sisters, I'm a fly in the ointment stealing their job.

And if that fly acts tough and declines the job, I can get why she's finding fault with me like this.

You're wrong, Too-chan. I'm not workaholic enough to think of stealing your job. Instead, please keep working on the maintenance. I'll be rooting for you two from the bottom of my heart. If it's Too-chan and Chika-chan, I believe you'll surely do it soon.

"Soon?"

"Ye-yeah. Soon. Well, even if I say soon, maybe it won't be done that much soon, but soon, for sure."

"Even if we couldn't do it for thirteen years?"

"Yes, even if you couldn't do it for thirteen years, soon— wait, what did you say now?"

The 13-year-old twins, for thirteen years?

Was there any description trick in the timeline being used here? Maybe what she said was that they couldn't do it even after three years — but even then, it would mean working on it at 10 years old, something that ignores the Labor Standards Act and reality itself, for sure.

"Wait a minute. Then it's almost as if Uncle Nao "manufactured" you twins as a copy of his own sister to be the ones in charge of maintenance for the nine artificial satellites launched when Kunagisa Tomo, the IT Department Head, briefly returned to the Syndicate."

"And when did I say it wasn't that?"

4

I can understand the wish to replicate the matchless talent lost known as Kunagisa Tomo. Or rather, even I would think of doing it. Like people collecting signatures to request a second part of a hit movie, or rather, when a great detective dies after falling into a plunge basin and people walk at the funeral procession waiting for a revival against the rules, I get the feeling of wanting a post-Kunagisa Tomo, a Kunagisa Tomo II. It's also something that often happens in manga, the fervent desire for popular characters returning. Even if it's an unnatural return.

Besides, if this thing about Uncle Nao making his own daughters as designer babies closely based on his beloved little sister is because of a love

that far transcended ethics and morals, then it's instinctively disgusting, but it's not like it can't be taken as a type of moving story. Like if it was because of a sorrowful mourning.

However, this isn't the case.

Did they make two children for the sake of repairing the artificial satellites? Children tracing back to the project's engineer? Since as long as it's a machine, it will degrade over time somewhere in the future, so, did they anticipate that and *give birth* to blue-haired and blue-eyed children beforehand?

What in the world is the reason I was born? Even I would intoxicate myself with this endless question in my second year at middle school, but for this sisters' case, there's surely an answer prepared for this self-discovery.

"The reason you two were born is to repair those satellites".

Moreover, this attempt failed.

That's why now the ball is in my court. For me, who is Kunagisa II, if you say in terms of blood lineage only… It isn't in the levels of getting your job stolen by an inexperienced second-generation entertainer.

The reason to live.

I stole their reason to have been born.

"…I don't get it. If that's true, it means that you were created about seven years after the satellites were launched. If you think about the plan to do it, it would've been even before that. Is there really the need to use such an inhuman method because of risk management or responsibility resulting from the expected deterioration over time? Even if you overly favor someone to their detriment, this would be about the Plan D, wouldn't it? Well, the anthropogenic satellites conceived by Mom were probably a revolutionary idea for that time, and it's still quite a useful technology nowadays, but if you ask yourself if they're really something worth to repair no matter what, so much to the extent of doing something like this, that's not necessarily true, is that?"

I provocatively ended up saying to Grandpa Rui that he should just shoot them down with nuclear weaponry, but that was just an exaggerated way of saying it.

To be frank, the gathering of big data can be done with other methods nowadays, after all… If you fully use the influence brought by the anthropogenic satellites to the Kunagisa Syndicate, the same thing can be done even without them, right? Is there any meaning to put such a cost just to avoid rounding values? The geographical information provided by smartphones can generate approximated values for human flow, isn't this enough?

If they can't, then there's no reason to.

They shouldn't need to risk the existence of the organization meddling

with taboos such as human clones made by designer baby technology thirteen years ago.

And despite that.

“Let alone space cleaning robots… *Aren’t they even anthropogenic satellites?* The things that Mom launched, that Grandpa Rui and Uncle Nao are trying to fix?”

“What a good intuition, Hii-sama. I wonder if this isn’t your mother’s blood, but rather inherited from your father? That father that almost forced the Kunagisa Syndicate to destruction.”

Have you gone that far, Dad?

I’m surprised you’re still alive…

“The anthropogenic satellites are anthropogenic satellites in fact. However, if they were only that, I’m sure that even I could fix them.”

Saying those anthropogenic satellites are “only that” feels weird for a layman (laygirl?) like me, who thinks those satellites are already strange enough… Then, she took out a smartphone thin as a microscope slide, unlocked it with facial recognition, and said:

“If that was the case, even someone besides me could fix it. If they used this remote control, that is.”

It seems it isn’t a smartphone or a microscope slide, but rather a remote control. Well, its glass surface was dimly shining in fact, while being inside this dim underground place — it seemed like a detached touch panel’s screen that could be used just like that.

It’s probably an own-made telecommunication device which its signal could reach even outside Earth, then… Even with just that, I can understand that this girl is a special engineer.

A blue-haired and blue-eyed “special child”.

“But it’s not that. I would’ve preferred if Aunt Tomo launched military satellites equipped with missiles instead of ones with AI… They’re incomplete.”

“What?”

“In the end, since she retired forever in the middle of it, Aunt Tomo didn’t complete the program to the very end. She tossed away half of the work that should’ve been done after launching the artificial satellites and then ended up eloping for the second time.”

Was these twins’ power desired so much not for maintenance or repairs, but for completing the satellites to begin with? Like letting Mozart’s Requiem be completed by his disciple?

“That’s why it stopped at just making precise measures of human flow from all humanity on Earth’s surface. The final goal of the Blue Savant — or rather, the ultimate goal of Dead Blue — was the total control over human flow.”

“Human flow’s… Control.”

“If it can grasp everyone’s line of flow at the long-term, by analyzing its data even further, don’t you think the lines of flow can be arranged heuristically? Don’t you think it could *freely* choose things like the places one wants to go and who one wants to see — the places where one wants to live and who one wants to love?”

Make their will be at the Kunagisa Syndicate’s will.

Lay rails in all human life.

That’s the anthropogenic satellite “Kunagisa”.

Second Day (1) —
White Old Mask

0

It can't be helped if you weren't able to prevent the first incident.
Take all responsibility for the second incident.
Or else you will be the cause of the third incident.

(Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 22)

1

She only said what she wanted and, in the end, without especially convincing me, she said: "Well then, good night, Hii-sama. Sweet dreams", and then left the prison, dragging along her twelve-layered kimono's bottom. Even I, who seem to have a habit of holding back people who are leaving, didn't say anything this time… I was far from being able to.

Well, I assumed I knew how much a naughty society misfit teenage Mom was, but to think it was that much…

The anthropogenic satellites made for the sake of controlling the lines of flow from all humanity… Observing humanity with the satellites from "Ichigai" to "Hachikiri", and then controlling it with "Kunagisa"… The image of them controlling people with radio waves from space like with a radio control is probably completely wrong, but that must grasp the essence of it.

Just like a mouse maze experiment — no, it must be intuitively closer to a slime mold maze experiment, I guess. The mold discovers the shortest path, but the one who've set this course is the researcher.

A device that can handle people like it handles mold.

Like when one gazes into the abyss, the abyss gazes into oneself, when people observe the stars, the stars also observe people… And then restrain them.

Block them[57].

Well, if that's the case, they sure would at least make some children.

If so, they would make designer baby human clones at least… if they didn't only want to repair it, but also complete Kunagisa Tomo's machine arts.

No, seriously, that's world domination.

It would be the same as controlling the natural phenomenon known as

weather.

Regarding women's progression in society, naively congratulating her for retiring on marriage is something important to be discussed as the one representing the youth that will shoulder the next generation, but in Mom's case, I'm really glad she married Dad and retired.

Ironically, that's why she won't let me touch machines.

It's precisely because she ended up doing things like this, that she won't let her daughter do it, maybe it's Mom's own way to atone for her sins…

Well, even if Mom worked at the Kunagisa Syndicate until her life ended, I don't know if she would've been able to end the anthropogenic satellite "Kunagisa"… There's also the possibility of Too-chan and Chika-chan, who were born to complete it, not actually being "defective product" because they kept failing for thirteen years, but rather because this control device is just a pipe dream that even the real Kunagisa Tomo couldn't do.

Although that theory won't comfort those twins who were born for adults' convenience.

…At any rate, it will turn into space debris since Mom abandoned it halfway, and Too-chan and Chika-chan couldn't do much about it.

If you think about the project's facade, it's more than ironic, but that's how it ends.

Just like Grandpa Rui, Too-chan didn't understand me to the very end, but there's no way I can write the program for controlling people's flow. The only program I wrote in my life was at middle school, the school athletic festival's program when I was a management committee member.

"Thank goodness. There's nothing to thank for, but thank goodness."

What a relief.

And besides, after Too-chan left, I don't know if it was Dad's genes or Mom's genes, but I fell asleep like a log at the cell, without having any good or bad dreams, so my physical condition and my feelings recovered.

I'm not saying that the gauge was up to full tank, but it's a condition good enough to take a challenge at an escape game from this castle.

Maybe this prison is my healing checkpoint. But on the other hand, something whispers in my mind that, if I entered this place sane and then lived here for 10 years, it wouldn't be a surprise if an innocent idea like planning world domination came out of my mind, so there's no use staying here for long after all.

Just as no use as I am.

It's probably too soon to remove the sutures, but after drinking today's fill of antibiotics, let's greet the maid-san and then leave this place.

"Jun-sama! So you were here!"

"Speak of the devil", or actually not quite it, though, but as soon as I thought about Bonbori-san, her voice echoed in this underground space.

Or maybe is a skill precisely because it's her?

I didn't even need to ring the bell then, did I?

However, considering how professional she is, she seems a bit flustered… Like when I treated her as my little sister.

But she's not acting, like she did that time.

She's not kidding, also… She really seems shaken up.

"!? W-why are you in the cell…? You have weird bed hair too…"

"There's a slight bit of circumstances and details about genes. Don't mind the bed hair, it's always like this."

While combing it with my fingers, I said "Good morning" to the maid-san at the other side of the cell bars.

"And sorry for moving to this place without saying anything. I made you look for me, didn't I? You're even panting this much because of it… Well, you'd probably think I just left without saying anything, right? It's fine, I wouldn't leave without saying goodbye to you."

I said that just right after thinking about saying goodbye and leaving, but then she said:

"Please calm down and listen! And come here immediately!"

With a loud voice echoing through all the underground prison.

I thought I should say that she's the one that should calm down and then stick out my arms through the prison bars to pat her shoulders, but, as if preceding that, she shouted loudly at the top of her lungs: "Your cousin — she was killed!"

"Someone cut her neck and killed her!"

My cousin was killed.

Which one?

3

After being told she was killed by having her neck cut, I expected a gruesome crime scene from the start. You might think that, since Kunagisa Jun is those parents' daughter, the Blue Savant and Nonsense User's daughter, she's probably used to seeing murdered corpses after all, but I have to say it, let alone seeing murdered corpses, this was my first time coming into contact with human death. Well, I did have some mysterious experiences, but those were only "mysteries without deaths" and "mysteries of daily life". I've never even saw a peaceful death after someone reaching their natural life span, so, on the other hand, is precisely because of it that it felt like a pipe dream without reality in it — as if I were reacting to a mystery novel character's death, walking somewhat unsteadily, I was guided by Bonbori-san so I could then run up to the crime scene.

Without even being able to think about the meaning behind this scene being in that guest room at Kunagisa Castle, where I was supposed to spend the night.

"—!"

I said I expected a gruesome crime scene, but this amateur readiness was easily surpassed by the real thing. In the first place, I didn't grasp the whole meaning behind what Bonbori-san said with "cut her neck".

How can I say that — I just imagined something like cutting the aorta or the trachea inside the neck with a knife, and then this became her fatal wound, but that wasn't the case.

What was laying on the tatami-mat was a headless corpse.

I said fatal wound, but it isn't a wound.

It's a *cross section.*

It was placed so one would face the cross section area right after opening

the guest room's *fusuma* door, so, although inappropriate, it reminded me of sandwiches cross sections' images that became really popular recently in society — this was the extent to which the girl's neck was completely cut off.

"To-Too-chan!"

I accidentally screamed that by reflex.

I nearly rushed to the corpse, impulsively wanting to hold it up — truly an average person's reaction. If it were Dad, who was used to solving many murder cases, he would respect the general rule of conserving the crime scene, and not only wouldn't get close to the corpse, but wouldn't even take a step into the room. If it were Mom? I have no idea what her reaction would be.

Fortunately, my impulse was blocked by Bonbori-san holding me from behind as if she was hugging me. Okay, hugging is a nice way to say it. In reality, it was more like she was pinioning me.

"Too-chan! Too-chan! Too-chan!"

Even while being tightly held back, feeling the maid-san in my back, I was still screaming. Even for a common person's reaction, it's lacking composure, in fact. Even if I said it was my first time seeing a dead body, and even if seeing the cross section of a headless body flustered me… Ain't I losing too much self-control just because it's my cousin's body, with whom I had a bit of a creepy interaction last night?

No, it's not that.

It's *precisely because it's the dead body of the cousin I didn't even know existed.*

Furthermore, she had been stripped naked.

She isn't just not wearing that heavy-looking twelve-layered kimono, she's stark naked. It may be impossible even for an experienced great detective to not get flustered after being shown a naked girl's headless corpse. Wouldn't it be impossible even for a soldier?

However — a headless corpse.

A naked girl.

Then, my reaction was too reckless. In the first place, not even I know why I thought the corpse lying there was "Too-chan" — it's probably due to my impression being pulled towards having talked a bit with her last night for the most part.

"Too-chan!"

"I'm alive, right here."

Her reply surprised me so much I thought I would fall down right here. If

Bonbori-san weren't pinioning me, I might have truly fallen down. Looking over, I saw her after she opened the *fusuma* door, wearing a twelve-layered kimono and looking at me with cold eyes, or rather, with eyes that seemed to be looking at an idiot.

How long was she there?

From the beginning, of course. She was seeing the common person's reaction from there, across her twin sister's corpse.

Not across Too-chan's corpse, but Chika-chan's.

"…Too-chan."

I called her name once more in a low voice.

Then…

I didn't get it, since it was a headless body. The twins that looked so much alike, as if they were "cloned humans", could only be distinguished by their hair styles. The long-haired Too-chan and the short-haired Chika-chan… Aah, and also, the corpse being naked is another cause for this foolish mistake.

What she was stripped off, well, it can't be known for sure if it was stripped off or not, but what she wasn't wearing wasn't the heavy-looking twelve-layered kimono, but the blue roses pattern thin-fabric *yukata*.

However…

"Uni."

Too-chan narrowed her cold eyes and looked down at her twin sister — what the hell are those eyes? Those blue eyes? If it was contempt for me losing my mind, then it can't be helped, and thinking of her rushing to her sister with her face in tears may also be too much of an over-dramatized delusion — *but why is she looking at her sister's headless corpse with those eyes?*

Is that a "special child" reaction?

Did Mom make the same reaction when looking at a dead body?

…If you say that, there's Uncle Nao too.

Even though his daughter has been killed in a way that one would want to look away from, he didn't fall on his knees, shed tears, or call her like I did.

He was looking at his daughter's corpse in a different way than Too-chan's cold eyes… Is it really the same thing being seen here?

Between me, Too-chan and Uncle Nao?

Or is it that Kunagisa Syndicate's people, Kunagisa family's people treat

incidents like this as everyday occurrences?

And about Grandpa Rui and Grandma Hoda — they didn't come here.

Then, was it affected and hypocritical for me, while not distinguishing between Too-chan and Chika-chan, to run to her and want to pick her up as I would?

"Bonbori-san… It's okay now, I've calmed down. You can let go of me."

"…Are you okay?"

"Yes, I'm okay."

To be honest, my heart is still beating fast, but by seeing Too-chan and Uncle Nao's reactions that couldn't be described as calm or indifferent, but rather a certain type of realistic reactions, my feelings ended up getting somewhat quieter too.

Although…

"Well, then… Can we at least cover her with something? That's just… No matter what, that's just too cruel."

Even if she were Too-chan, whom I just met yesterday and talked to for a bit last night, panicking like that was going too far. And all the more for Chika-chan, whose voice I've never even heard. Even if I say she looked like teenage Mom, if I tried talking to her, just like happened with Too-chan, I would see her personality is obviously quite different… Even if they were cloned persons, the same way their fingerprints are different, their personalities would be different too.

But even then, if a naked girl was killed being beheaded, normally, at least a sheet would be placed on her. Crime scene conservation?

Keep your sleep-talking to yourself.

"…Understood, Jun-sama."

Bonbori-san said that and then let her hand off me, and then, when I wondered what she was doing, she put her hands on her back and untied her apron.

"It is okay to do that, right? Nao-sama, Too-sama."

As she did that, she turned to the two at the other side, in other words, the victim's close relatives. Father and sister.

Too-chan didn't answer — she was looking to the headless body without moving a muscle, but Uncle Nao said:

"Aah. Thank you, Bonbori-san. And Jun-san too. For caring about my

precious daughter in our noble place.”

And then he smiled.

He smiled.

“Noble I am really poor at handling these situations. It may not seem like it, but I’m sad, even like this. I’m wailing inside my heart, noble me and my noble daughter, too.”

Why does it sound so insincere? Is it because he’s insincere? Of course, each person shows their own way to be sorrow about something, and also, there’s no duty to show sadness no matter what.

But, even if I try to follow-up him like this, the state of Too-chan still glaring at her sisters’ corpse like she didn’t even hear that was bizarre either way.

As if.

As if she were seeing *her own corpse*.

“—…”

While I was looking at Bonbori-san quietly nearing towards the headless body, placing the pure white apron on her, I couldn’t get why I wanted to say something like that.

Because, if it was Too-chan at least, but for Chika-chan, to whom I didn’t even talk properly… Is it because I’ve heard from Too-chan about their situation? To what purpose, to what goal, they, my cousins, were born as “special children”?

The blue-haired and blue-eyed girls who were created to take Kunagisa Tomo’s remaining work were also, in a certain way, Mom’s daughters? And by saying “Mom’s daughters”, is it because someone like me was kidnapped that they were dismissed from their job and have became unemployed? And then, that’s why I wanted to show appreciation for one girl’s life?

I don’t know.

Without knowing yet, I said.

With a low voice that wouldn’t be heard by anyone, without losing my self-control, I said my condolences.

“Chika-chan, you’ve worked hard.”

“That’s a heavy loss, isn’t that? Almost as if all the investment so far wasn’t worth it. I can’t avoid to be filled with grief.”

World Heritage, Kunagisa Castle’s castle tower, top floor.

It was where everyone gathered. It’s almost like a mystery novel solution scene, but even then, in reality, we didn’t even understand yet what type of mystery was inside this utmost tragic incident.

Kunagisa Rui. Kunagisa Hoda. Kunagisa Nao. Kunagisa Too.

And me, Kunagisa Jun.

Of course, Chiga Bonbori-san is here as well.

Bonbori-san is the only one standing, and Grandpa Rui and Grandma Hoda were in the higher placed spot at the other side of the bamboo blinds, just like yesterday, but the six of us were forming a circle.

The outline was told by the first discoverer, Nao-san. When he woke up in the morning, he went to search for her, who wasn’t in the watchtower, and when he visited my guest room, Chika-chan was there, killed.

Uncle-nao’s tone while reporting it to Grandpa Rui was calm, not only calm, but considering it’s his own father, it was somewhat too polite, and also distant.

Although they’re father and son, they sound kinda businesslike…

Maybe they’re estranged after the coup d’état, and even if it’s not that, these two may just have this type of relationship after all.

Like a meeting.

As if a family meeting equals a businessmen conference for them.

And after hearing Grandpa Rui’s impressions after receiving the report, I could feel it all the more. “Loss”.

The investment not being worth it.

…He does seem somewhat filled with sorrow, but through the bamboo blind it’s hard to tell if it’s true or not.

And as for Grandma Hoda:

“……
……
……”

She’s still completely silent, not seeming to be disturbed by her grandchild’s death at all. Even though it’s not the grandchild that she first met

yesterday, but the one who was raised in this family for thirteen years…

Let's put aside how she was raised…

When things turn out like this, the peer pressure starts making me ask myself if I'm not the weird one. If I'm not the one saying odd things.

However,

"In the end, she was completely useless, right, that Chika-chan. I'm so sad."

I couldn't agree with what Grandpa Rui said this time, no matter how much peer pressure there was. No, it wasn't like I raised my voice and started refuting them after it, so maybe it was the same as if I agreed.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 61

Being silent is the same as approval.
Or rather, the same as being dead.

That being said, I couldn't understand what Too-chan was thinking, not even raising an eyebrow while listening to them talk about her dead sister like that. She has been just like that since the time at the crime scene, but it can also be that she's now thinking something completely different.

At that time too, maybe it looked like she was glaring completely at her sister's corpse, when actually seeing something completely different?

With those blue eyes.

"But, well, on the other hand, since she would be useless even alive, it's not like it's that big of a problem now she's dead, I guess. Let us all think positive here, fellows. We couldn't earn a return that would compensate for the investment, but now, there's no need to invest even further, so I think it could be said we succeeded at cutting losses. Isn't that so, Nao?"

"Yes. My noble father. Indeed."

While listening to this conversation between the former Syndicate Head and the current one, these father and son, it is — since I couldn't avoid listening even if I didn't want to —, I think. Cutting losses.

Decapitation[58].

"…Excuse me, can I ask a question?"

I raised my hand and said that.

Trying to force my way into an adult's conversation may be impolite, but it's not like I raised my hand because I couldn't listen to this talk anymore.

It's not that.

"What is it? Grandchild. If you have something to say, let us listen."

"Yes… Well, I'm not in the place to say it after mistaking the corpse for Too-chan at the first time I saw it… But is it really Chika-chan's body?"

Calling a corpse as "it" may be lacking respect, but there was no other way to say it. It was too gruesome to show respect… But on the other hand, calling it more formally would be too distant considering it is my cousin.

If it was my cousin.

"Since it was a beheading murder, and she was naked… Isn't there a chance of it being a completely different person's body?"

When Bonbori-san said my cousin was killed, at first I thought about Too-chan, and then if it's not Too-chan, it would be Chika-chan, by process of elimination. But if it's a headless corpse, you can't see her face.

In the first place, in the context of mystery novels, the base reason for decapitating a corpse is to make so the victim's identity can be concealed.

It's not like I'm thinking it would be nice if it were another girl's dead body instead of Chika-chan at all; Is just that, deeming it as Dead Blue's dead copy, Kunagisa Chika, is hasty isn't it?

"It's Chika. I can assure it."

She said.

It was the first time I heard Too-chan's voice today.

"It was Chika's fingerprints after all. I checked it a moment ago."

"Eh…?"

When she was glaring at the headless corpse narrowing her eyes, was she staring at its hands then…? Long before I could even think of it, she had verified the possibility of the victim being switched"?

No, no, but, still, there's no way she could identify a human's fingerprint at that social distance she kept away from…

"She can. Because she is my noble daughter. She can even filter precisely in her head the fingerprint of a peace sign in a photo."

"Also, Chika could do it too" — Uncle Nao complemented… So he does have a doting for his daughter if he's bragging about her abilities then? Or rather, maybe he was bragging about his "little sister's" abilities… When it comes to photographic memory, maybe Mom was able to do something like that when she was younger too, if I recall it correctly.

Nowadays, it seems she suddenly stands up and then forgets why she did it… Well, this is just normal aging.

“Jun-sama. Although it may seem impertinent, but just for reference, I also think that the headless corpse is Chika-sama.”

Bonbori-san said that, reinforcing what was said before.

“Of course, it’s impossible to surely identify a headless corpse by its looks. But since she was naked that way…”

“? That’s what I’m saying, though. There’s no way to identify her by the clothing or rather… If she were wearing that *yukata* it would be possible to identify her.”

No, if it were the twelve-layered kimono at least, but even for a corpse, it’s easy to make it wear a *yukata*. And even if she were wearing a *yukata*, we couldn’t be sure it was her. Because maybe it would be a diversion…

That could be said even for the long *juban* I was wearing. Well, when I rushed over to the guest room it couldn’t be helped that I was wearing it, but now I did got to change over to the Sumiyuri School uniform after all.

“I knew it was her because she was naked. I hesitated to bring it up since there are men here, but when I got close to Chika-sama to place the apron on her, I could be sure of it seeing her up close.”

“Aah. Got it.”

She didn’t even need to say everything. If it weren’t for this situation now, I would be blushing at my indiscretion. Even if I call them blue-haired girls, it’s not like their head’s hair is the only hair in their body… Even letting aside their special upbringing, thirteen years old is a bit of a tricky age, but in this case, it serves as her identity confirmation.

There’s only two blue haired and blue-eyed children in this castle. Or maybe in all of Japan. If one of them checked the fingerprint of the other one, it can be declared as her, for sure.

There’s not even the need to do a DNA test. And there’s also the possibility that, if they do something like this, it would be thought to be Mom’s corpse.

“But, if so, why was her head cut off? And where is it now? From what I saw earlier, it wasn’t anywhere in the room…”

It’s not like I wanted to erase the foolish statement I made before, but I asked that to no one in particular.

To no one in particular — trying to make a logical discussion about a headless body may be a weird way of thinking about it, weird like the Kunagisa family members’ thoughts too, but even then, that cross section.

It's not a historical drama or the Place de la Concorde — it shouldn't be easy to cut someone's head like that. If they went to the trouble of doing it, there must be a reason.

"Aah, that's right, we'd better find her head. If we can't, then there's nothing we can do, but let's at least search inside the castle one time, since it would be troublesome if a tourist finds it."

And then Grandpa Rui said something so out of place, and more than that, it felt kinda shallow… Is what I want to say not getting through him?

Yesterday was like that too… So I thought it would be useless if I didn't say that clearly, so I phrased it directly.

Let's forget the respect for the aged mindset just this once.

"I think it's better if we let the police search for it. And does anyone here have any clues about an involved person that could be the one who did this…? If it's not a switch or a swapping trick, this body damage may show a deep resentment towards the victim, or we can think is someone that have a strong emotion towards her, at least "

I ended up saying this superficial knowledge. Hey, hey, "deep resentment towards a 13-year-old", what's that about? I'm currently wounded through my whole body, so what I'm saying here could be taken so seriously as a coroner saying it, but, although she was naked, her skin didn't have any signs of being wounded — if it was a deep grudge, wouldn't she have more bruises or scratches?

She was beheaded only. They only wanted to cut off her head.

It may be a faulty statement, but that's the impression it gives.

"The police? Oh, right, I forgot to call the police."

Said Grandpa Rui.

I thought they did it long ago while I was inside the prison, but I was surprised that they didn't even think about it. However, what really surprised me was his following statement.

"If a family member is killed inside a World Heritage site like this, covering it up doesn't seem easy, so we'd better ask them nicely about it. Or is it that, being inside a World Heritage, and being a family member, it's actually easy to conceal that? What do you think? Nao."

"Chika didn't have a family register and her existence wasn't known to the public either. She isn't listed in a public position in Kunagisa Syndicate as well, so I think avoiding it becoming an accident is rather easy. Rather than the police or the media, it's harder to keep tourists that will eventually be here quiet about it, so, as you said, we'd better clean the crime scene completely before they come."

What?

The capable men promptly advanced the conversation, but didn't they just said things like covering it up and concealing? After I almost picked up Chika-chan headless body (which at the moment I thought it was Too-chan, though), and also, after ignoring the principle of crime scene preservation and asking to place something to cover her, maybe I shouldn't be saying this — but, did they said cleaning the crime scene?

Are they trying to call the police to have a meeting with them, and then trying to finish it internally? This situation?

…Because she doesn't have a family register?

"—!?"

Unconsciously, I looked back at Bonbori-san, but her lips were in a straight line, so she didn't seem to want to interrupt the conversation. No, she couldn't, right. As an apprentice maid, to interject in a Kunagisa family decision.

And although I have the Kunagisa surname, since I'm not part of the Kunagisa family as well, I couldn't just easily say "hey, look, you two, please wait a minute" to them, while they were advancing smoothly with their concealment plannings.

"It could also be said this was fortunate in terms of timing as well. Since it was the same day my daughter's daughter appeared here. We can just let her smoothly take care of Chika's work, right?"

"Indeed. Then, we can give my noble daughter's personal device to Jun-san. I am sure Chika would be happy with this too. It would be the best farewell gift for her."

They're smoothly going forward with this.

Even I, who certainly refused the job offer, was being included in the schedule. Automatically.

No, I get it. I understand.

If this incident ends up becoming public, not only the suspicious expressions such as blue-haired and blue-eyed designer babies and human clones, but also the existence of the nine anthropogenic satellites owned by Kunagisa Syndicate could become public knowledge as well.

Anthropogenic satellites.

Observation satellites which not only ignored privacy, but also human rights themselves.

Even if they cleared the legal problem about it, if these satellites become public, it may be a big irreparable damage for the Kunagisa Syndicate… The

devices that supported the Kunagisa Syndicate through twenty years, and the plan to improve them furthermore, it could all actually work against them now.

If then, legally clearing the incident as a separate problem would actually have a lower risk, and this profit-and-loss point of view is understandable.

In a profit-and-loss point of view, reporting it would be a loss.

However, what about feelings?

Not only the neck, but would they loss-cut the feelings too? Not only the neck—

"Ah…"

And then I realized.

The reason why they're not treating this murder case as an actual case… The reason why they are hiding even the death of Chika-chan, whose life was also concealed.

It's also true that revealing the circumstances of her birth or the satellites' existence would be bad, but wouldn't the fact that a person in Kunagisa's family killed someone in a World Heritage be even worse than that?

For instance, Nao-san.

If the first one to discover the corpse, the Kunagisa Syncate's head had actually been the one that killed his own illegitimate child… It wouldn't be just a big irreparable damage. It would risk the existence of the Kunagisa Syndicate, which ruled west Japan for a long time. It would even risk the current state of Japan as a country.

If the murderer is someone here, then…

…Even for me, and even without thinking about such a large-scale event, if I felt a family member could be a murderer, I would hesitate too. And besides, it's simple to line up here fair arguments that are easy to understand, but even Dad and Mom aren't decent people either. If someone said the reason why Kunagisa Syndicate is in the middle of this situation's maelstrom traced back to my parents, then, as someone who attends school thanks to those parents, let alone using fair arguments, I couldn't possibly argue back.

If Mom didn't launch those incomprehensible satellites, if Dad didn't marry Mom so she wouldn't retire, Kunagisa Chika-chan wouldn't even be born.

If she weren't born.

She wouldn't have been killed.

“—Give me a break!”

I vigorously stood up. To the extent that maybe I could fly from this top floor even if I didn’t have wings.

The adult’s discussion was interrupted, and then everyone looked in my direction. The Syndicate Head, the Honorary Syndicate Head, the Castle’s master, the cousin and the apprentice maid — all of them looked to someone insignificant as me. The nervous commoner flinched for a moment, but by stamping my feet, I could brace myself. From an outsider’s perspective it would look like I was just being hysterical, and actually, I was.

“Even though a murderer could be here among us, and you expect me to stay in a place like this?! Until help arrives, I’ll be holed up in the prison by myself!”

5

If we talk about lines from mystery novels that I would like to say at least once, it would probably be the ones like “You are the culprit”, “I knew the truth behind this incident from the beginning”, “Elementary, my dear Watson”, “Yippee-ki-yay”, “quod erat demonstrandum”, “Everyone gathered and then the Detective says ‘Now then—’”, but what I said at that moment was the lines from the second murdered character.

Even if I say so myself, I’ve never imagined that the daughter of the Blue Savant and the Nonsense user would do such a mob character move.

A small fry to the very end, ain’t I?

However, this proud shield here, without being embarrassed or waiting for everyone’s reaction, quickly left the audience room from the castle tower top floor briskly and helter-skelter, descended the spiral corridors of Kunagisa Castle, went straight to the comfy prison and, although it may have no meaning, locked the cell’s latch from the inside, and then sat down in a far corner of the niche, holding my knees, as a I succeeded at barricading myself here.

“Whew.”

I caught my breath.

As I couldn’t bare that adult’s conversation anymore, as a child, on behalf of all children, I fled from that place — as a matter of fact, it’s not like I did think that the culprit was among those members.

Is just that, in my whole life, that was the first time I sensed my life being at risk. …The risk that I didn’t have time to feel when Aunt Jun hit me with

her supercar.

That Kunagisa Chika, just because she didn't have a family register, just because she was a designer baby, to try to conceal her death so systematically as that… Well, they're probably able to do it. If they exercise Kunagisa Syndicate's authority, even the death of a common person with a family register can be deleted as if they used an eraser.

The autonomous driving paradox.

If an AI is able to keep safe driving no matter what happens is developed, no one will follow the crosswalk anymore — in reality, you can turn this paradox the other way around too.

In other words.

No matter how many people you hit with your car, no matter how many old persons you heavily injure, no matter how many children you kill, if you're not going to be punished no matter what, not a single vehicle will follow the red light anymore.

Aunt Jun is exactly in this position, but anyone who isn't punished or criticized won't hesitate in breaking the law.

"That's why."

If Mom's family, in other words, the Kunagisa Syndicate is this type of organization, my life will always be at risk. Because, even if they do kill me, anyone, anything won't be troubled by it.

In this meaning, my behavior yesterday was too dangerous… Declining a Kunagisa Syndicate's offer right away was too reckless.

If you say that I still hadn't lost the family consciousness towards them after being forced to hear that business' talk, then there's nothing I could do about it, but at that family tree, where things such as disowning and coup d'état are only natural, thinking no way they will harm their adorable grandchild was too naive.

I already knew too much to turn down their offer.

They informed me too much.

It felt strange that Grandpa Rui and Too-chan told me, who they had just met with, all those Kunagisa Syndicate secrets so volubly, but it's just that their feeling about it was that if I refused, they could just erase me… Oh no, I'm seriously suspecting everything now.

At this rate, it won't be different than if I said that line seriously.

Even then, even if it's too much of a victim complex to think that refusing the job will lead to them killing me, how could I know for sure that I'm not

among all the stuff they blatantly said that would need to be “concealed”?

Realistically speaking, the naked, headless corpse of Chika-chan must be the work of a degenerate somewhere out there. However, if they want to hide everything about this fact, what’s the reason for them to let me, who is and also isn’t their family, alive?

And I didn’t even touch a machine…

Talk about being utterly useless.

In terms of cost performance, is there a reason to keep me alive? Can this machine illiterate return all the investment?

Dad’s Nonsense Series - No. 23.

Cherish life.
Anyone’s life. Even yours.

“…Save me. Dad. Mom.”

As I powerless muttered these words, burying my face in my knees — I came to my senses.

Phew.

The second breath.

Well, well, although I said I would hole myself up in this prison until help comes, those parents leaving Kyoto and boarding the limited express to get all the way here is just not happening. It isn’t “they probably won’t”, but rather “they won’t”. They’re not the type of person that would throw everything away for their beloved daughter.

Although she retired and cut off her ties with them, Kunagisa Tomo is still a pure member of the Kunagisa family, and to be fair, Dad is even beyond that.

A touching story about the Nonsense User, who had covered up more than half of his life, putting his daughter above everything else was rejected right away at the script discussion.

I think if his daughter dies, Dad will anguish as if he were at hell’s bottom for three days, and, after it, he’ll be cheered up by someone and will get back on his feet, doing then a kinda selfish growth in the end.

Oh right, right, in the meantime, he may solve some light mysteries maybe. Or rather the mystery about my death… Although I said I came back to my senses, by imagining this future, I actually ended up angry.

This is the parents’ responsibility, isn’t it? Everything, from me being kidnapped to now. And even then, if he does things like coming to save me

with a smug face, or solving mysteries, I might run off with some random guy somewhere, you know?

…Solving mysteries.

Who killed Chika-chan? Why was her head cut off? Why did they take away her head? Where did the *yukata* she was wearing go? What's the reason for her being in the guestroom instead of her room in the watchtower? Did she die by being beheaded? Or did she die and then they cut it? — In the first place, what's the culprit's motive? To commit a crime in a World Heritage site out of all places, are they stupid?

Even if I enumerate them on and on, there are piles of doubts. And the important thing is that solving all those mysteries is "not" necessary. Actually, solving them is "nothing" but an action uncalled for.

It doesn't matter if the murderer is someone from the Kunagisa family or a degenerate, this murder case will be covered up. Even the registers of the victim, of Kunagisa Chika being alive will be completely deleted. They will be carefully washed away. That's why, even if I pin down the true culprit, my safety won't be guaranteed… Even though investigating the truth may increase my risk of being murdered.

That's why, if I were a genius, it could be judged that the best plan would be sitting like this, holding my knees in this prison, curling myself, as I wait until this storm passes and the people up there bring things to a conclusion.

"……"

But I will solve it. I will. Because I'm an idiot.

Not because I'm the incarnation of intellectual curiosity, not able to not solve a mystery when there's one. Not to brush off the sparks that will fall, and not because I'm driven by a sense of justice and ethic that makes me want to apply the law either. And it's not to avenge the cousin I just met for the first time yesterday as well. Mom's dead copy? It's not my business.

Yes, It's not. It's a girl I don't know.

To the extent that, by having her head cut, she couldn't even be identified… Too-chan inferred by the fingerprints, and Bonbori-san by her downy hair, but I couldn't do both.

I couldn't, but at the same time, I thought.

It doesn't matter if it's a designer baby, a human clone, someone without a family register, if she had fingerprints, if she was negligent about her downy hair care… It was a living human being. It wasn't an all-around shiny action figure. Not a special child.

Not a blue fairy.

Not a character.

So, it's normal, totally normal, extremely normal, for me to be enraged about it as if I saw on the news about an unknown girl being killed somewhere else on this planet.

And if no one else is enraged about it.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 53.

Forgive the ones you feel you cannot forgive.
Do not forgive the ones who think they will be forgiven.

Second Day (2) — The Twins are Meager[59]

0

Instead of unifying your goals,
Unify your enemies.

(Dad's Nonsense Series No - 42)

1

"Hi there, my noble niece. I'm sorry for that thing earlier, my noble family showed an unsightly scene there. I came here because I thought I should apologize."

When I've fiercely made up my mind while holed up in the prison, Uncle Nao appeared all of a sudden. I had completely and naively imagined that the first one to come here would be Bonbori-san, so I was a bit bewildered — or rather, I was embarrassed.

Although it's a theory only, when I thought "maybe the culprit is someone here", the first one I doubted was this Uncle Nao, in fact.

That's awkward.

It's not that I thought that, since he was able to coup d'état his own father, it wouldn't surprise me if he did behead his own daughter. No, I actually thought about it, a bit, a lot. When Dad recalled his wife's brother, he would often regard him as a person of character, but I can't count on that Nonsense User's eyes for judging people. All the ones he trusted were criminals, weren't they?

But well, if I judged him rationally, rebelling against his father and stripping his daughter naked to cut her & behead her couldn't be regarded in the same way.

On the other hand, trusting from the bottom of my heart this businessman that, after losing one of his two twin daughters, started making plans about concealing it was quite difficult as well.

"It's I who should say so, by showing that ugly behavior, Uncle Nao. I couldn't be more embarrassed for losing my mind like that. I swear by the name of Kunagisa Tomo, I've calmed down now."

For now, while not changing my positioning from the depths of the prison cell and bringing up Uncle Nao's doted little sister's name, I managed to build a hypothetical safety valve between us.

Even if it's not a wall, at least a valve.

Well, if Uncle Nao was the culprit, it would just mean that he killed Mom's dead copy, so this proud shield who shares only half of her genes could be torn and thrown away as a failed mimeograph print. However, I should do all that I could, even if it was a desperate measure:

"Right, right, Mom would always praise Uncle Nao about this and that, you know? She would say at every opportunity it's because of Uncle Nao that she's able to be who she is now. I think that Mom should have married Uncle Nao instead."

I'm sorry, Dad.

Your daughter is desperate to survive.

"Is that so? Hehe. No matter how much time passes, she is still a child isn't she? My noble little sister."

He doesn't seem as dissatisfied with it as I believed. To think that such a shallow flattery would work on him… It worries me that someone with such a personality is in charge of half of Japan.

"…What about Too-chan? Is it okay to leave her alone?"

"? What's the problem with it?"

I didn't think he would ask me back. No, well, is it okay for you to not be with her after receiving the shock of her twin sister being killed like that? And she may also fall victim to the degenerate who did that, so you should be watching her — things like that, I mean… Do I need to start explaining all these things?

Let's leave Japan in eastern Japan's care, I guess.

"Don't get it wrong, Jun-san."

Uncle Nao said that with an elegant tone.

Now that I think of it, this person calls me by my name. Unlike Grandpa Rui. Well, memorizing an insignificant person's name may be not more than a business technique, though. Maybe a swindler's technique.

"It is true that taking only the surface of that conversation between noble me and my noble father could perhaps be seen as if the Kunagisa Syndicate is an organization that looks down on life."

Taking only the surface? You guys gave me the impression that it's just like that even for the most depth level, though.

"I won't deny we place our company's protection above survival instinct. However, being noble as I am, I live my days considering that it would be normal if I was killed anytime, anywhere. When I was around your age, my life became the target of a dreadful professional killer, but I thought at the time

that not being targeted would actually be unnatural. Although very young, I'm sure Chika felt the same."

"This is Kunagisa Syndicate's noblesse oblige" — said Kunagisa Nao, sincere and as a gentleman[60], looking in my direction.

Although across the prison bars.

And at the same time, I was also holding my shoulders making a cross with my arms, so it was somewhat like a Japanese-style "The Silence of the Lambs", but the fact that I was the scared one was different from it.

At any rate, he came with the noblesse oblige thing, huh… He didn't get close to his fifties saying noble this noble that for nothing. It's because his mind is so resolute that he won't get stuck on his tracks due to his daughter's death, huh.

That's contrastive to me, holed up here like that.

"When I hear something like this, I think I'm not really a Kunagisa household member after all, you know? Because no matter how and where, if someone dies, I'll pity them. I'll feel it would be better if they didn't die."

"That's fine. The Kunagisa Syndicate exists to protect peaceful thoughts like that."

He's saying it as if his company's policy is contributing to society, the Head of the organization which is operating artificial satellites that watch over all humanity, and that could control all humanity with algorithms in its completion — this guy is saying it.

"So, to sum things up, since Uncle Nao and the other members of the Kunagisa Syndicate think it's only natural for them to be killed anytime, for any reason, it's also only natural even if Chika-chan was killed in a way like that, and that's why you guys don't care about the reason behind it?"

Oops, did it sound a bit sarcastic? For someone who fled into this prison out of fear like me. But it can surprisingly be an understandable logic.

But it's also an effective logic if applied.

How could you teach someone who isn't afraid of being killed that killing someone is wrong? Can't someone who thinks that any reason for being killed is fine kill people without reasons too?

Talking about the metaphor with the eraser, it would be like using the eraser in a text that doesn't need to be erased just to test its effectiveness…

"I won't say we don't care about it. Because we need to build a system for recurrence prevention now. Because even if I say that it would be natural if every single Kunagisa family member were killed, I don't want Chika's twin sister, Too, to be killed by any means. There's no way a father would think

that, right?"

With a speech tone that sounded like I was the wicked one for imagining this context, if he expanded the organization with negotiations like that, he's not an uncle who can be dealt with by ordinary means after all.

In short, his claim is that he doesn't want to say that a scene where he sorrows or feels conflict about she becoming a headless body is unneeded because she is a human clone killed in a mystery novel context. Just like in a zombie movie, no matter how human-like they seem to be, the ethical implications of blowing zombies to bits with firearms won't be questioned about.

"That makes sense. So it was that, then. Right, right, right, right, I'm convinced. I'm sorry, it was because you guys started that talk all of a sudden that I received some cultural shock. But I understand it completely now, the Kunagisa household situation. As the one representing the ignorant people, I will be proud from the bottom of my heart for being you noble guys' far relative. Although I'm aware of how much pressure it may be, please keep the good work from now on. Can I go home now?"

"You can't."

Tsk. You're really hearing carefully, huh, and I thought I would be able to shove it at the end, though.

"Jun-san, you received a job request from my noble father, didn't you? The satellites' maintenance… My noble daughter must have visited you here to persuade you, right?"

"Yes, right, that is so, though…"

Then it didn't get hazy after this murder case happened, did it?

Too-chan said that she came here after being told so by Uncle Nao in fact… Although it was a crabby interaction, as a member of the organization, she truly did the report, contact, and discussion steps with her superior it seems.

"I was told she was able to convince you, just so you know."

"What the hell, she lied!?"

She didn't only gloss over about not being able to complete her duty, she actually said she did it although she did not… That's truly a child's lie, isn't it?

What an extremely dangerous thing to do…

"Is it a lie then?"

"A lie, or rather… I clearly said that to Grandpa Rui and Too-chan though, I'm not like Mom. I was raised in a *different way*. I wonder why they can't get

it…”

Was then Mom that much different? An existence enough to make everyone around me think there’s no way all that talent isn’t inherited genetically…

“Please take a look. The hair and the eyes are not blue, right? And there’s no punchline about me using hair dye and color contact lens, okay?”

“Don’t they say a skillful eagle hides its claws?”

“I’m a noir eagle. A pitch-black one[61].”

I attempted to say “a black-haired black-eyed normal girl”, and then closed my mouth… The one I’m talking to now, unlike last night, isn’t a blue-haired blue-eyed girl. Is an uncle with black hair and eyes just like me.

Even though he is dying his graying hair…

“You don’t need to worry about me, Jun-san. This noble I had not thought about wanting to be blue-haired and blue-eyed like my noble little sister not even once. Although there was a time I dyed my hair so she wouldn’t feel lonely, now that I think of it, that was my noble youth’s indiscretion. After all, I am the “I can be a special being even without a special power” type of main character.”

“Is that so?”

Am I like this too? No, no matter how much I struggled, I couldn’t become the Kunagisa Syndicate’s Head.

But in fact, if you put it objectively, if you ask who contributed more to society, Mom or Uncle Nao, then everyone would agree with the latter. Because, even if the one who launched the artificial satellites was Mom, the one who applied them was Uncle Nao

Uncle Nao it’s probably a *siscon* that went too far, in fact — but his complex is not in the sense of inferiority complex towards his little sister… I guess?

“There was a time it was that too. However, there is no doubt that noble I got to be who I am now because of my noble sister’s help.”

He reused the flattering I spewed just a moment ago. My heart hurts. It hurts more than when I was hit by a car. Mom didn’t say a single word of that.

The awkwardness inside me increased, so I brought the subject that deviated from the Kunagisa siblings and turned it back to my cousins and the artificial satellites.

“So, that’s why, although Too-chan showed me hers, even if you hand over to me that thing that looked like a microscope slide — Chika-chan’s personal

device? —, the only thing I could do would be inserting it into a microscope."

I can use a microscope

As long as it's not a digital one.

"So, although this might be none of my business, please have more faith in Too-chan."

Maybe she will be able to accomplish her great cause after inheriting her killed twin sister's device, right?

"That's the problem, Jun-san."

He said.

Since I was scared of being erased just by firmly declining the maintenance job, I planned to get over this crisis by saving Too-chan's face, but that was a dead end.

Uncle Nao said that as if he was just waiting for me to say that — I was tricked.

"Originally, noble I intended to hand over the device to you here, my noble niece, as a coronation ceremony. To officially bring you to the Kunagisa Syndicate."

"To think such a serious turn of events was decided somewhere while I didn't have the slightest idea… I don't like surprise parties, you know?"

"The surprise is we don't know the device's whereabouts."

Uncle Nao said.

Uncle Nao said as if this was more of a problem than not finding Chika-chan's head yet.

"Not in her room in the watchtower, not in her luggage… Not in the guest room where she was murdered too. Although she would usually carry it close with her… Almost as if it was a part of her body."

Personal device. The original device the twin sisters used to remotely control the maintenance for the satellites. It's like a smartphone, a mobile computer, and a remote controller at the same time.

I wonder if, for those twins, who were born as Kunagisa Tomo's fake goods for the sake of doing the satellites' maintenance, it was truly almost a part of their bodies… Or rather, it wouldn't be strange if it was for them an organ more important than their brains.

"…Wasn't it stolen by the murderer? Perhaps… Was stealing it their goal?"

I almost said “to kill someone for such a thin glass board”, and then I remembered that it’s the key for having humanity from all around the Earth under someone’s control.

Perhaps she was stripped naked so they could look for that remote control…? In fact, Too-chan took out her microscope slide from a gap in her twelve-layered kimono too. If it’s a device thinner than that thin yukata, she could hide in a way like that… No, even then, it wouldn’t explain her head being cut off.

No matter how much they succeeded in making it thin and small, it’s not like it could be placed between her teeth or under her tongue. It’s a precision-based machine, and it’s made of glass above anything else.

“That’s not it, Jun-san. The fact is that this explains the situation. The device being lost explained to noble me why my noble daughter’s head was cut off. The reason why they took away her head.”

Huh? What?

For someone who was trying to conceal the case, this person, did he just solve the mystery? Is he the pattern of detective that looks like he doesn’t care about the case but ends up solving it anyway? This type does exist, now that I think of it.

Give it back, the seething resolution I made.

“Well, about that, Jun-san.”

“Wait, wait, Uncle Nao, I’ll solve it on my own. Hmm…. A rational reason for both the tablet and the head being lost?”

Umm… While it was a headless corpse, this didn’t matter at all in regard to concealing her identity, so — If there’s a hook linking it to the satellites’ remote control. Aah, I got it!

Her brain! They want her brain!

The brain of the girl who was born only to do maintenance for the satellites is what one would call the “Kunagisa” specialist intellect, so by inserting electrodes in it and analyzing it with a computer, they can draw out the way of using the device! To hack a brain, incredible, today’s science!

“…That’s not right, it’s for facial recognition, isn’t it?”

No matter how much of a machine illiterate I am, I know how far current science has advanced at least… Just like I know that smartphones nowadays have authentication by facial recognition using the front camera in them.

Last night, when Too-chan showed off her device to me, she purposely unlocked it with facial recognition… That makes sense, if stealing the remote control for the satellites, and by extension for humanity, was their goal,

stealing her face itself as well would be a reasonable thing to do.

As the key for unlocking it with facial recognition.

They beheaded a 13-year-old girl.

The corpse lying inside the guest room was no more than the remains after the needed part was stolen — it was a keychain from which its key was detached. Although it's not like a headless naked corpse could be turned into keychain merchandise.

"Yes. As expected of my noble niece. Those two may have failed life, but they succeeded at child raising it seems."

"What? Did you just diss my parents?"

"I praised them. For being like a missing link, not connecting the abuse chain to the next generation."

The abuse chain…?

Ah, the usual prejudice of abused children not being able to love their own children because they weren't loved by their parents in the first place, so they don't know how to do it and end up abusing their own children too.

Well, there were peculiar abusive acts like forbidding me to touch machines or making me memorize one hundred weird phrases, but at least — at least I wasn't confined for ten years.

In a prison.

"… But it's a secret, a conversation between just you and me, so, to be fair, to be honest, if I confess, I'm not acquainted with machines at all, though… So, can facial recognition work even with a dead person's face? I've heard something about it not unlocking with sleeping faces, as a security measure, I think…"

It may work with people who sleep with their eyes open, and maybe they can just sew the eyelids so it opens, I guess?

"It's not like I tried it, so I can't say for sure. Nevertheless, we must expect the worst. That the anthropogenic satellites' technology may have leaked to an external party."

"……"

"The nine satellites which can measure human flow and moreover have the potential of controlling it. There is no way we can let this overtechnology be handed to a criminal. We must recover it at all costs."

He's saying that, huh.

Putting themselves aside… Well, maybe not actually aside but launching it to Titan?

Is acting like that what makes a politician?

“This won’t change the fact we will need to place a large-scale request for the police, but the situation changed. I could even say it drastically changed. And that is what I wanted to tell you, my noble niece… And that’s why keeping yourself in this prison was the right choice. Even if you are a noir eagle, that doesn’t mean the criminal will think so…”

Is he saying I might end up being targeted too? No way… Because, if Uncle Nao’s theory is right, the culprit already achieved their goal — no, that’s wrong.

After all, only the glass won’t be enough. Because not only she couldn’t do the artificial satellites’ improvement, which was Chika-chan’s reason for being born, but she wasn’t able to do its maintenance either.

Not only the glass.

They need an outstanding engineer. The worlds’ best if they could…

“I wonder if I should write “I’m not a genius” on a sticker and paste it on me. Like the names in school’s gym uniforms.”

“It might be a good idea.”

He said that half-mindedly, just to match the conversation, and then went to leave this place. I hesitated a bit if I should hold him back and continue this talk, or if I should let him go. If the culprit’s target was the device, I would advise him once more to be together with Too-chan, but it would only be me dragging that topic again, I guess. And I also feel that might be bad at this level to think that the culprit in an outsider. However, as the Kunagisa Syndicate’s Head, there’s also the possibility of him using this argument to remove the family members from the list of suspects. If it’s a premeditated crime, there’s no use pointing that out. Just like there’s no use pointing out the correct meaning of premeditated crime[62].

The right choice is shutting myself up and seeing him off.

But, although I thought about doing it —

“Er, Uncle Nao. Is it fine if I ask about one more thing?”

— Being bad at farewells, I asked a question that was so insensitive that even I cringed.

“Is it true that Mom was confined in this prison for ten years?”

“What? That’s wrong. From whom have you heard this misinformation?”

It's misinformation then? If he asks me about who told me that, well, it was Too-chan, but is that girl just full of lies then?

It's a level of fake news that, now that I've been told that it was misinformation, even I don't know why I believed in it — but then, why do I feel so cozy in this prison? Why do I feel so comfortable in this place where its discomfort index will obviously increase at noon? And besides, something felt off with his way of denying it, saying "that's wrong" —

And as I was bewildered about it, Uncle Nao said:

"The one who was confined in this prison was Kunagisa En. He was my noble sister and your noble Mom Kunagisa Tomo's twin brother."

"Too and Chika were made from his ashes."

Second Day (3) —
Prison Gate Inquiry

玖渚近
KUNAGISA CHIKA
Cousin.

0

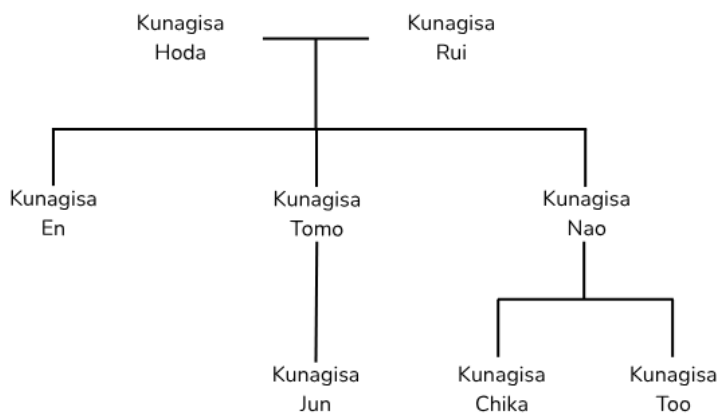
Do not fear failure.

Do not fear success.

Fear punishment[64] **only.**

(Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 8)

1



2

Did you think I'm someone who would obediently follow my kind blood-related uncle when he said that I should stay safe hiding in this prison?

I'm Kunagisa Jun. A proud shield.

I was born to disobey adults.

I won't raise the white flag. I will raise the standard of revolt.

As a matter of fact, even if the existence of an external criminal, or an industrial spy so to speak, was raised to the surface, I think there wouldn't be a change in Kunagisa Syndicate's stance. He was saying stuff like sense of justice and world peace, but to be honest, it doesn't matter if it's a criminal or a degenerate — if an outsider got involved with it, it was also true that covering things up internally had became difficult.

But I must also consider the possibility of him just using arbitrary reasoning to make me calm down after I acted hysterical and unpredictable because of this question… Or else, this timing would be too convenient.

Just when I made up my mind about searching for the true answer, a kiiinda reasonable "solution arc" was presented… Maybe a headless dead body due to facial authentication is a first when it comes up to mystery novels' history, but it being original doesn't mean it's the truth.

Not to mention that there are some mysteries remaining yet.

Why was Chika-chan killed in the guest room?

And to discover it, I escaped the prison (the latch was placed but it wasn't locked), and came back to my room, which I couldn't actually call as my room. To be honest, I was able to feel at peace in that place after hearing that Mom was confined in it, but now, because I was told it was someone I don't know, there was also the fact that it suddenly got uncomfortable.

If this were a proper mystery novel, a room where a girl's body was discovered would be quite taped for crime scene conservation by now, in order to make its entrance forbidden, and I would need to make a plan about entering it with the room being severely guarded by police officers, but in this case, no one was there.

Let alone a "Keep Out" tape, there wasn't even a "there was a corpse here" tape. Or rather, Chika-chan's corpse was still lying here, covered by Bonbori-san's apron.

They didn't take it out for autopsy.

I thought maybe it had been transported to a place suitable for conservation, though… Aah, the place most fitted for it in this Kunagisa Castle, the underground prison, was occupied, now that I think of it.

Anyway, when I visited it earlier this morning, following the principle of crime scene conservation, I was pinioned by Bonbori-san when I made the first step when trying to rush over to Chika-chan… But this time, there's no one in my way.

I can do as I please.

I guess Bonbori-san is probably running around searching for Chika-chan's head and the microscope slide… I will allow myself to do an on-the-site inspection in the meantime.

I won't say I need to see it a hundred times, but I should do a second take at least65. I don't think that Uncle Nao and Too-chan's reactions were right at all, but it's also true that I wasn't calm this morning.

Maybe there was an important, fatal oversight.

I entered the room, and, of all times, sat in *seiza* beside Chika-chan's cadaver and clasped my hands together.

Rather than a prayer, it was a stance of apology.

After I prayed that she could at least rest in peace, this amateur high school girl here is trying to do an autopsy make-believe, so… Although I was the one who said to place something on her, I removed the cloth with my own hands.

Nothing ethically different from the culprit who stripped a 13-year-old girl naked.

But even being fully aware of it, I needed to verify it… It's not like Too-chan and Bonbori-san said arbitrary excuses, but I want to be sure this body is from no one else besides Chika-chan.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 90.

Don't trust it just because it's the truth.

Sometimes in Dad's Nonsense Series I feel he is just saying unreasonable stuff, merely unusual stuff, but if I take it in a favorable way, I think what he is trying to say is that truth is not something you believe, but something you know.

"I'm sorry, Chika-chan. If we met in heaven, I'll treat you to bubble tea."

The critical people may say its boom passed long ago, but I won't let myself be manipulated by trends' ups and downs. Let's put aside if we both will go to heaven… I went for it and took off the apron.

"Uhh……"

I ended up groaning instinctively.

Not at the headless cadaver that appeared. I received a shock as if I were heavily punched from something that seemed like a decomposition smell thrusting in my nose… That's right, summer vacation isn't the best season for preserving a corpse. Wouldn't it decompose even in a cellar?

Not to mention that it's a World Heritage site.

Although it's called a guest room, there's no air conditioner. The ventilation is good, but the sunlight shines from the latticed window, so it's a

temperature that makes me think I'll be sweaty just by standing still.

I was ready for the visuals, but this smell… I should've worn a mask. There's a chance that it already had started decomposing this morning, but at this point-blank range, it can't be ignored. I can't avoid smelling it.

"Hm…"

Although I was covering my nose and mouth with one hand, I started the autopsy anyway… If I were to flinch here, I would've rather stayed in prison for the rest of my life. For hygiene reasons, I would like to have goggles to protect my eyes, but I don't have any. Courage is all I have.

Really, I'm serious about this.

I don't have the super prodigy's amazing feat of verifying fingerprints with the naked eye, but if it's just checking her downy hair, you can leave it to me.

Hm. It's blue in fact.

In terms of biology, the head's hair and the body's hair colors won't always match (calico cats exist too), however, instead of thinking about where did they get a body of a girl that had black head hair and blue body hair, we could declare that the head hair of this corpse was blue too.

What Bonbori-san said was true.

However, by looking close to her naked body like this, although it seems she was raised healthfully. unlike Mom, she's still just a girl after all… No matter if it's for world peace's sake or for the sake of world domination, I can't forgive something like this just for some satellites' sake.

The anger started boiling in me. Although I want to act like a cool girl, I'm quite hot-tempered, ain't I?

Dad was actually like that too.

But there's nothing good in getting emotional, at least now, in this moment. While controlling my heart, I tried touching Chika-chan's upper arm.

I know, I know.

Even ignoring the crime scene conservation's principle, if I were told that touching the cadaver was an utmost lack of respect, I wouldn't be able to argue against it. Unless you're a doctor or within the second degree of her kinship, you shouldn't do this… But it's just that I needed to be sure of something.

That she's human.

…It's not that I was suspicious of the headless body being a mannequin. I don't know how realistic a trick using a true-to-life doll implanted with blue hair to deceive the discoverers is, but my goal wasn't to make it clear if it was

true or not, it was to verify the rigor mortis state.

I understood that the decomposition progressed, but what about the rigor mortis?

I've heard that decomposition and rigor mortis can't coexist… But with this amateur intuition, it still seems very rigid.

I couldn't sense the softness typical of a girl, it actually felt like a mannequin instead… Terrified by my own godless act, I immediately took my hand off, but the sensation lingered in my fingertips for a while.

It may remain for the rest of my life.

"Hmm……"

I looked closely at the neck's cross-section. It had completely dried up, and the bleeding had stopped. For a decapitation, the amount of bleeding seems small. Well, it's not like I'm aware of the average bleeding from when a girl is decapitated, though… Besides, even if it's a small amount, it ruined a World Heritage tatami mat. But if I may say my amateur thinking, I'd say this isn't a wound from when she was alive.

The beheading happened after her death.

I don't know if this would be of any consolation for Chika-chan… But although there was nothing such as signs of trauma or external wounds on the body, the same can't be said for her missing head. It should be considered too the pattern where she was hit on the skull by a blunt weapon and then her head was taken away to hide this "death cause".

If we talk about possibilities only, she could've also died from something not related to a murder crime at all, like a heart attack, perhaps… But even then, the decapitation is an actual crime.

Hmmm.

However, for the time being, I couldn't come up with a theory that could deny or surpass Uncle Nao's theory of the head being used for facial authentication. And there's still the mystery about her being killed in the guest room instead of in the watchtower, though… Why in my room…?

After reaching a dead end, although I was no Ishikawa Takuboku, I stared at my hand. The hand that touched Chika-chan in rigor mortis. Not only the rigor mortis, but also the downy hair's sensation still remains.

Blue hair…

"…What are you doing, Hii-sama?"

"Ahh!"

After being talked to all of a sudden, I couldn't help but turn back suspiciously — like the old woman in Akutagawa Ryuunosuke's "Rashoumon". No, well, I don't remember the old woman's reaction when she was found by a menial, but my feeling was as the situation of a body snatcher being found.

The one who was there when I turned back was Too-chan.

I wouldn't even need to turn back, the only one who would call me by "Hii-sama" in the whole world is her.

"……"

The genius child is disgusted.

At her cousin doing her twin sister's autopsy.

Since when was I being watched? Was it when I was checking the rigor mortis? Or when I was smelling the corpse odor? When I took the apron off?

"Th…That's not it! No, well, maybe it is… But it's not like what you're thinking, Too-chan!"

I raised my voice and explained myself.

It ended up sounding somewhat desperate, and although I shouldn't say it, it made the suspicious tone get stronger. I'm starting to look like *Datsue-ba*.

I should have been showing off friendliness, not turning around like this.

"Please understand! Kunagisa Tomo's daughter is innocent!"

"Don't use your parent's name for something like this."

Looking at me in disbelief, Too-chan entered the room… She closed the *fusuma* door with her hands behind her back and made the guest room into a locked room. I flinched for a moment asking myself why she did that, but in the first place, the fact I left the door open when sneaking into a murder scene was more of a problem.

I lacked cautiousness.

"I know what you're up to. You're here to play detective, aren't you? That's about something Kunagisa Tomo's daughter would do, huh."

"…So that means you're here for that too?"

"Uni. I just came here to very ordinarily say my farewell to my twin sister."

Since finally there are no eyes surrounding me anymore — she said and then sat down next to me. She wasn't sitting in *seiza*, but her posture was good. A posture that shows respect towards the dead, unlike me.

“Eyes surrounding you… Are you talking about Uncle Nao, Grandpa Rui and Grandma Hoda?”

“Yes. It isn’t easy pretending to be a genius.”

She said that without hesitation, while looking down at the headless body… She doesn’t seem like she will clasp her hands in prayer or shed tears.

However, her appearance was different from this morning in fact. The morning when she did the so-called genius pretending…

“…Don’t you need to do it with me? Pretending to be a genius.”

“Even if I did that with you, you know…”

She smiled at me in an unpleasant way.

Except, it wasn’t unpleasant.

“Did you get along well with her, with Chika-chan?”

“It’s not like we got along well or not, since we’re designer babies, you know. It was like two as one, one as two. Although the origin for it seems to be a time when Father was targeted by an assassin that was like this.”

I heard this story about being targeted by an assassin a moment ago, but to make it the origin of making these children, this isn’t normal is it…

In that case, I think that things like the color of their hair and eyes are not proof of being special after all. By sitting close next to her like this without bars between us, Too-chan voluminous hair is fascinating in fact, is charming and eye-catching — catching…

“……”

“Together, we were Kunagisa Tomo. We did pretend to get along well, just like we pretended to be geniuses. We couldn’t do the update for the artificial satellite “Kunagisa” that was expected from us, no matter how many years passed by, so we needed to at least pretend to be Kunagisa Tomo. Even though there was no need for doing that, we would change our hair to match her in the former days… When you think about it, it’s disgusting, isn’t it? Even you, Hii-sama, you wouldn’t think about changing your hairstyle to match your mother when she was young just because you’re her daughter, would you?”

“If I did, I wouldn’t be sane.”

A hair catalog from twenty years ago, who’d use that?

I don’t even go to the same hair salon as her — no, it’s not like we’re on bad terms… No one would wear the clothes chosen by their parents, right?

“There are times when Mom wears my Sumuyuri High School uniform,

though… And then, there was that time she went with Dad on a date, and they were questioned by the police…"

"Could you stop? Could you please not destroy my inner Kunagisa Tomo's illusion?"

"I'm her human clone, you know?" — said Too-chan.

Clone…

Kunagisa Tomo's twin brother, Kunagisa En's ashes…

I've never heard from anyone about Mom having a twin brother — and to think that I have one more uncle… An uncle besides Uncle Nao, that was a shocking truth, but I shouldn't meddle with it…

And my feelings of not wanting to have known it are quite strong too.

Why did I have to know something even Dad didn't?

But I was aware about the tidbit of Dad thinking Mom was a boy when he first met her. I just thought that this may happen for children, and that it was all for this episode, but knowing that Mom had a brother, this talk changes a bit.

The blue boy. The blue girl……

If perhaps there was a reason for Too-chan and Chika-chan not becoming Kunagisa Tomo, wouldn't this be precisely it? I can't help but think so. If the "materials" used in the engineering weren't from Kunagisa Tomo herself, even if they were from her twin…

"? What is it, Hii-sama? Staring at me like this."

"Aah, it's not that."

There was an awkward pause.

Even if what she reported to Uncle Nao was a lie, when I think that Too-chan really believes that the one confined in that prison was Kunagisa Tomo, it gets even harder to tell her that.

To dodge this topic, I said in a confused way to Too-chan what I didn't plan to tell her, without even organizing it in my head.

No.

I said that to Chika-chan.

"Listen… Are you the culprit? Chika-chan. Did you kill Too-chan, cut her head and switched with her?"

"…I'm so clueless about it that I can't even bring myself to discuss it, but please continue, Hii-sama. Perhaps we can find a compromise."

I must praise her for not closing the door for negotiation and letting me continue with this instead. And she did that to a body snatcher. However, this thing about her can be said as decent too, unlike Uncle Nao. Or rather, unlike Kunagisa Tomo.

And also, unlike me.

Since she allowed me, this Hii-sama here will continue.

"Like what Bonbori-san said, there is blue downy hair in this headless corpse in fact. It was true. I think it's fine for us to think that this body was likely from someone with blue hair. However, there's still room for doubting whether it's from Chika-chan."

"… Right. Now that you mentioned it, you did think that I was the one who was killed, and then you got quite shaken up by that. I secretly got embarrassed by realizing you liked me that much. I didn't let it show on my face, though."

"You're really skilled in behaving like a genius, huh."

"It's a matter of survival, after all. …But in the end, I'm the one alive as you can see, and besides, I told you so, right? That the fingerprints were from Chika-chan."

"This is just your saying on it. It's not like anyone besides you could check fingerprints. Just because you said the fingerprints were from Chika-chan, it's not proof of the corpse being Chika-chan."

Even for twins with the same genes, their fingerprints will differ.

However, for those twins who were used to behaving "like" they got along well and that would usually act together, mixing the fingerprints — or rather, replacing each other is possible.

She could just say that it was a fingerprint from her sister and then present a glass with her fingerprints on it, and then, even if they actually sent it to police forensics' investigation, she could get her way with it.

"I see. You're talking about using the biased thought of fingerprints being different even between twins, right? That's an interesting trick, Hii-sama, shouldn't you become a mystery novels writer?"

"I wish to become a manga editor. You know that, right?"

Hearing that stock phrase got me a little excited, but then. Too-chan — no,

Chika-chan said:

"But I wonder"

Tilting her head.

"Then, Chika — excuse me, should I say Too? — The fact that this corpse was naked was to allow *the replacement* to happen, so the twelve-layered kimono I'm wearing right now could be stolen, right? Then, isn't it an oversight that the corpse isn't wearing the *yukata*? If it was a *yukata*, it should be easy to dress the body with it, right?"

"*It would be. if you didn't remove a twelve-layered kimono*. While you were spending time removing it from the corpse, the *rigor mortis* progressed. That's why you couldn't put the yukata on it."

"You can stick reasoning and ointment to everything, huh. Why not become a Nonsense User?"

"I would rather die."

"In fact, a Nonsense User wouldn't fail to notice the flaw in this trick."

While she praised Dad for some reason, Too-chan, or actually, Chika-chan held a tuft of her hair — her voluminous blue hair.

"How do you explain "this"? Indeed, if it were Kunagisa Too replacing Kunagisa Chika, then this twins' replacement trick could be valid, in fact. Cutting the head off and then hiding it somewhere. And then, to impersonate my sister, I could cut my long hair so I could become short-haired. Since the only difference between us sisters, twins among twins, is our hairstyles after all. …Well, I don't get at all what the motive for this replacement would be, though."

That was a weak point, but I have no choice but to get through it acting as the type of great detective who doesn't care about the culprit's motive. Can I get through it? Somehow, I feel like dark clouds are gathering.

"Uni. However, even if *I*… Excuse me, even if *Kunagisa Too* could replace *Kunagisa Chika*, *Kunagisa Chika* couldn't replace *Kunagisa Too*, right? If it were about just cutting her long hair short at least, but, in only one night, growing the short hair to long hair, what type of youkai you think I am?"

Youkai, huh.

That was my first impression too.

And even now, she looks like one to me.

If a headless body being made for the sake of facial authentication was unprecedented, I guess a murderer beheading someone for a reason like this would also be the first and maybe the last.

I said it. The few words that would be the finishing blow to Too-chan, or actually, Chika-chan.

“Hair donation.”

“……”

“If it were Too-chan replacing Chika-chan, there would be no need for cutting her head. But even then, the reason why you beheaded her wasn’t because you wanted her face or her brain, but *her hair*. To make a wig with Too-chan’s voluminous hair. If you wear it, you could transform overnight from the short-haired Kunagisa Chika into the long-haired Kunagisa Too. From the blue-haired and blue-eyed little sister to the blue-haired blue-eyed older sister. You could evolve from “Dead Blue” to the Blue Savant.”

I felt reluctant66.

But the case is now solved with this.

4

“I am so sorry. I have no excuse for placing such groundless suspicions on you and hurting your honor. I can only imagine how much pain you must be feeling. As you can see, I am apologizing by prostrating myself like this, so, I beg of you, please forgive me.”

“Can you stop prostrating yourself on the ground? Please don’t do it right next to my sister’s corpse?”

I apologized with all my will to Too-chan, or rather, Chika-chan, no, that’s not it, to Too-chan, who was indeed Kunagisa Too, but I ended up bewildering her instead. However, no matter how much I bowed with three fingers on each hand on the floor or rubbed my head on the tatami, it wouldn’t be enough. I rubbed it too much, so my forehead felt like it would catch fire, but even before that, my face felt like it would burn.

I see, that’s why those brilliant great detectives don’t show their deductions until the very last moment. If you get ahead of yourself and reveal it proudly while it’s still on the hypothesis stage, it will be more than just feeling embarrassed.

Really, I’m filled with regret right now.

I wanna die.

Dad’s Nonsense Series - No 63.

No matter how embarrassing it is, shame won’t kill someone.

Dad, I'm really feeling like I'm going to die, though.

"Come on, raise your face. Don't cry. You're wasting your beauty, Hii-sama."

"Uhh… Thank you. I'm really sorry… How could I do such a thing to someone from the bereaved family…"

I can only say I got too influenced by my instincts when I first saw the headless body and thought it was Too-chan… The typical fool who won't accept their mistakes and then gets dragged by it deeper and deeper.

"I'm telling you, don't mind it. Even if you say bereaved family, even I am part of the Kunagisa household after all. …I do think you're careless and foolish, though. All you had to do was grab my hair and pull it before you said that."

"I can't do such violence to a girl."

"A moralist… And to think you revealed a deduction about the killed "me" having her hair close cropped after being beheaded."

Stop, my conscience hurts.

I'm seriously saying this, though. It's to the extent I wanted to shave my head to show how sorry I am… After I let out those delusions that I presumptuously called as deductions, Too-chan silently took my hand and let me touch her hair.

And with that lively texture only, I could already think "ah, this isn't a wig, huh" as I instinctively realized that it was real hair, but then, while she kept her hand on mine, she let me gently tug at her blue hair.

I felt the girl's scalp through her hair.

If I wanted to go all the way through with it, I should had pulled some out to analyze the hair root, since perhaps there was also the possibility of her sticking it with some glue, and, to an extreme logic, the same way my wounds were stitched, her hair could also be sticked to her hair in a way like that too, maybe, but, yeah, yes, I don't want to keep with this anymore, I don't want to keep piling shame on top of shame.

So, in the end, it was a wild pitch and then a huge strikeout.

With things turning out like this, in the first place, what I regretted most was not delving into the motivation for her doing something like that… Since they're both Kunagisa Tomo (En?) clones, no matter if they were switching or one becoming the other one, it's all the same.

The only reason I could come up with would be a psychopath thinking of doing it just because she wanted to wear the twelve-layered kimono.

“I won’t ever make a deduction again, so please forgive me. I will drop out of school too.”

“The punishment you’re placing in yourself is too heavy… Please go to school. Just because you offended your cousin, it won’t make you have any troubles at school, right?”

Good grief.

Just because humans are prone to making mistakes, this aspect can’t be an excuse for a mistaken arrest.

“Don’t worry that much about it. If you say so, Hii-sama, even I was somewhat suspicious of you being the one who killed Chika.”

“What? Why?”

I was bewildered, but then I came back to my senses.

I didn’t think about it at all.

No, not because I’m upright and clean-handed, of superior character, just and aboveboard and a guiltless innocent, a living model of an honor student that would never break the law, it’s not that, it’s just that I know more than anyone that I’m not the murderer… However, now that I think of it, the only one who knows my innocence is me.

When the crime took place, I was inside the prison by my own will, but it’s not like I was firmly locked in there, I was free to go in and out.

And it’s not like I talked with Too-chan for long enough to have an alibi… On the other hand, now that I think back on holing up myself in that underground cell, that action taken by intuition that even I couldn’t explain properly, it could even look like a poorly fabricated alibi.

It’s not like I’m a great detective, so why would a murder case unexpectedly happen right when I visit this World Heritage site? Or is this the usual for the Kunagisa Syndicate? That’s what I unreasonably thought, but supposing I was the culprit, these doubts would quickly be solved. If the one who came here weren’t Holmes, but Jason, then what do you think? It would be strange if no murders happened.

However, to think I’m the murderer just because of it?

“That’s cruel! Too-chan, you suspected me!?”

“You’re a cousin I just met yesterday.”

“You know I wouldn’t ever be able to kill someone, right!?”

“I wonder, though. You’re the daughter of those parents after all… If two identical people were around here, it seems to me you could kill one of them

just because having the two of them would be misleading."

Your impressions towards my parents are too bad, aren't they?

And it's frustrating not being able to deny it.

I won't cover for that couple, just so you know.

"But I wasn't suspecting you because of the timing. As you said, Hii-sama, it's true that the Kunagisa household is an environment where a murder could happen at any time, at any timing… And it is a family environment in fact. It has been brutal, you know. To be fair, what is unusual is the fact we both got to live up to this age without being killed."

Pretending to be geniuses was worth it then.

If my abduction has rendered all that effort futile, I can't deny that I was an indirect cause for Chika-chan being killed, though…

"But then, why did you suspect me? I can't believe you were suspicious of your own cousin."

"You exposed yourself, huh. The mirror isn't a machine, so you could try touching one, though."

"Even if you say like I let slip a secret, it's not like you can say I'm an engineering expert based on that."

And I can't let my guard down.

Nowadays, even some cosmetic tools have ICs or AI. For me, even in the bathroom, I don't know where a landmine might be buried. It's almost a war zone.

"It was because the crime scene was *here*."

And then.

Chika-chan stated the reason for her suspicion.

"The murder took place in your room. It's normal for someone to think that you're the culprit. Even if they're not a genius, even if they're not a 'special child'."

Ahh… I see.

I see… I see way too much.

"…I see."

In a certain way, I got why Chika-chan was killed in the guest room… Not in her room in the watchtower, or rather, not anywhere else, but in this castle tower's guest room, that mystery was solved.

It was to make me look suspicious.

Mistaken arrest…

While I nonchalantly went for a night walk and, after that, slept in the prison cell, the culprit took the opportunity to commit the crime where I was supposed to sleep… To make me look like the murderer.

No way, was that the reason?

Did they want to place a false accusation on me — who was about to take part in the big job that is fixing these satellites, as I was being placed here by connections — and then hinder my entry to the Kunagisa Syndicate?

…If then, although I won't say that they should have killed me directly, did they kill Chika-chan instead of me because killing a human clone would lead to less guilt, like that zombie movie logic? Was it Chika-chan instead of Too-chan because at the time the crime happened, she was trying to convince me, the culprit's true target…? For now, I don't feel anything weird with this logic I'm building right now.

If they wanted to set me up, then they could go all the way, cutting her head, stripping her clothes, so they could make me look like a grotesque degenerate, as it would be better for achieving the goal of expelling me from the organization… But, after all, this logic applies only to me, since I'm sure that "I am not the culprit no matter what".

Even if this were a first-person narrator novel, I couldn't clear away the "Maybe I'm just assuming that this is the case. Maybe I have a split personality" suspicion.

Even if I say it seriously, that would be useless.

If you talk about being careless, not realizing this point was more careless than anything, but, if seen from the point of view of the others, I was the most suspected of having killed my cousin.

Boom.

"Ho-however, Too-chan, you said it in the past, right? "I was somewhat suspicious" you said. That means you aren't anymore, right?"

"No, I just somehow said it in the past, though…"

Well, yes, that can happen too, for sure.

For mystery novels, saying it in the past or not is an important factor ("Aren't you saying you already knew that they passed away?"), but for that to become a decisive factor is just too much.

"…But is true that I stopped suspecting you. Uni. Maybe saying I stopped is too much. I wonder if it's like when cloudy weather gets cleared in some few

moments… However, you probably wouldn't be here avoiding people's eyes and playing Rashomon like this if you were the one who killed Chika."

"You can't never be sure. Maybe I'm a true degenerate."

"My cousin being a necrophile is harsh. Like if my father being a *siscon* wasn't enough."

She said that and then opened her arms wide. For a moment, I didn't quite understand what she meant, but, from what it seems, it's a proposal for reconciliation… We both suspected of each other being the murderer, but we decided to take a break for the time being.

I opened my arms too, and then we hugged like in a sitcom family.

"Ree-chaar-ging."

Too-chan said this nonsense.

While having a headless corpse at our side, maybe we were finally able to act like normal cousins?

玖渚遠
KUNAGISA TOO
Cousin.
Second Day (4) —
Blue Hair Memorial
玖渚盾
KUNAGISA JUN
Me.

0

Treasure your friends.

Because one could die tomorrow.[68]

(Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 87)

1

At any rate, I was raised in a family that had really scarce socializing with relatives, so I got somewhat rather seriously hyped up by being able to form a warm friendship with a cousin the same age as me, but on the other hand, it's not like the situation progressed.

Since the suspicions on me were cleared, it actually ended up feeling like being cornered. Maybe Uncle Nao suggesting I should stay at the prison cell for a bit longer was actually his way to convince the suspect of being detained…?

It could be.

While he was pretending to be calm, maybe he was extremely mad at having his daughter killed, and maybe he's now making the arrangements for torturing me in a torture room somewhere in this Kunagisa Castle…— "What do you take parents for, Hii-sama? It's fine, Father wouldn't do something like this. Even if you actually did kill Chika, he would forgive you smiling."

"Is that really what parents are like?"

"This guest room was left in a way anyone could enter last night, right?"

She said and looked over the room.

Over the room where her sister died.

"There was no lock, padlock, or bar, of course, no autolock too."

"Hm. So it wasn't a sealed room… It was free for entering and exiting then."

And that's not just limited to this room.

Even for the Kunagisa Castle itself, anyone can enter and exit it.

Since it's a World Heritage, maybe there are guards placed far outside, but if one could somehow clear it and then cross the bridge and enter the actual site, there would be no guard then. If there was one, it would be a cute maid-san at best.

And that's precisely why there's a place for supposing the culprit was an outsider, though…

"I wonder where everyone was on the night of the incident. I was in the underground prison, and then Too-chan came to have a secret date with me…"

"Your memories are getting changed at Mach speed you know? I wasn't even your friend last night."

"Excuse me. And then Too-chan came to see me there, but you slept at the watchtower, right?"

"That's right. Father, Chika, and I all had rooms prepared for us outside the main castle… Well, it is not like we're forbidden to enter the castle tower without permission. I guess Father just didn't want to sleep in the same building as Grandfather after doing a coup d'état to him, so he took that in consideration and distanced himself from him."

That's what I thought, but this distance scale is big, isn't it?

While it seems like he's humbly distancing himself from his father, he's also sleeping in the World Heritage's watchtower… And the grandparents who suffered the coup d'état are in the castle tower's top floor. Grandma Hoda is this castle's master after all, so this positioning may be suitable then.

"And what about Bonbori-san? That reminds me, where is she sleeping?"

"Chiga is the one in charge of looking after your needs, so she must have a small room prepared for her on this third floor."

A small room? Could it be a secret hiding place they used in old castles for hiding warriors…? No, there's no way someone can sleep in such a small space. She wouldn't even be able to crawl on all fours. However, she said she would be nearby, in fact.

"That's why, if there was an intruder, maybe she heard some noise from the crime scene… When I casually asked while pretending to be a genius, it seems she slept soundly last night and didn't notice anything."

Well, I was the one who made her tired, after all.

Even if we talk about noises, since we're in a historical building, it would be unreasonable to ask if she noticed something when the building itself rattles for no reason from time to time. Although she could react to the bell sound, like an occupational disease, though…

Although, no matter if she was sleeping or awake, normally, would someone think to commit a murder in the same floor the maid-san is, and in a room without locks…?

"Too-chan, you visited this room one time, right? This proves anyone could enter this room at any time, but when you saw I wasn't here, you

wondered if I wouldn't be in the prison cell, right?"

"Yes, that's right, Hii-sama."

"That means there was no headless corpse here then. We can be sure of that, right?"

If she answered it now with "no, there was", I wouldn't know how to react, as her friend and as her cousin too, but to my joy she answered "of course", just like one would expect.

"That's why the crime must have happened after it. …If I visited here a bit later, I might have been able to stop the murder."

"……"

I think she should feel lucky for not running into the murderer. If she faced the culprit cutting a girl's head and taking her clothes off, even if she truly were a genius, I think a 13-year-old girl wouldn't be able to do anything.

"…When you got in charge of convincing me, Chika-chan was sleeping in the watchtower, right?"

"Yes. That's what I said."

"I get that you two wouldn't be always together just because you're twins, but why wasn't Chika-chan the one in charge of convincing me?"

"Well, that was because, although we're twins, I was the one considered as the "older sister", I guess…"

After saying something as if they were normal sisters, Too-chan asked back to me:

"Are you saying that, if Chika were the one who went to talk to you, I would've been the one killed instead?"

"I mean, maybe. But if you say that, if I had obediently slept in the guest room, maybe it would be me."

Once I actually talked about it, both possibilities were frightening. And they're not just unrealistic possibilities.

"Maybe the culprit didn't have a single target… If it was an indiscriminate crime, I worry about Chika-chan's behavior when it happened. Why did she come to this guest room if she was supposed to be sleeping at that time?"

"Didn't the indiscriminate murderer forcibly take her here? And they could have carried her while she was sleeping too. …And there's the possibility of her coming here on her own will too, I guess?"

"Maybe Chika-chan tried to convince me on her own as well… Whether it

was on her own or by being requested from Uncle Nao separately…"

"Add the chance of her mimicking her "older sister" as well."

Would she do something like a normal "younger sister" would? Well, asking that would be insensitive. I decided to grieve her death like I would do for a normal girl.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 35.

"Normal" is normally a compliment.

"…However, as if investigating a living person's alibi wasn't difficult enough, we won't be able to understand her movements that night, right?"

"We can."

"What?"

"Ah, no, that's not it."

She quickly took her words back.

And as if to gloss it over, she said:

"We could understand in the past, that's what I meant. This is a genuine past form. I'm sorry, Hii-sama. Sorry for saying something that raised your hopes up."

And then she spread her arms wide.

Is she trying to cover it up with a hug?

"Sure."

For the time being, I accepted her hug. I hugged her. And then, still hugging, I whispered in her ear: "It's fine, say it, Too-chan. Even if it may be wrong".

"I won't stop putting hopes on you."

"Are you trying to cajole me?"

"You really are Kunagisa Tomo's daughter, huh" and after saying this thing that I didn't understand well and wasn't sure if she just got that now or if she was being rude, Too-chan said:

"Not only Chika-chan's, but all humanity's movements could be investigated with the device we, the Kunagisa Syndicate, possess, right?"

She said it painfully.

She said it painfully because I was hugging her, though — aah.

That's right.

"The anthropogenic satellite, 'Kunagisa'."

The origin of this situation. Its main cause.

2

That is what measuring human flow means. If it plans to watch over all humanity, it's not limited to just Chika-chan. Even the culprit's movements would come to light. With the diffusion of smartphones, security cameras, and dashcams even, the setting for mystery novels is getting quickly narrowed, but these nine satellites would put an end to the stages for performance altogether.

All criminal activity gets literally seen through.

World Peace wasn't an exaggeration — on the other hand, the genre known as mystery would become a fantasy just like one with swords and magic, but someone with good sense would say it's a small price to pay for exterminating crime.

However, as an avid reader, I must reply and say this is an abominable dystopia.

What scares me is that, even at this stage, the satellites launched by Mom are still incomplete.

The anthropogenic satellite "Kunagisa" main purpose is not measuring human flow, but rather controlling it. In other words, based on how it's used, it can make completely innocent people commit crimes.

It can also create an unsafe region and guide someone vulnerable there. It can even lead a lightly dressed girl who knows nothing about it to a room where a criminal who likes beheading is…

"But that was why I said 'past'. Almost half the satellites are not working properly anymore, and the remaining ones aren't in perfect conditions either. Even if the orbiting satellites' sensors measured this Kunagisa Castle last night, getting it out of focus would be the most they could do."

"I-is that so…?"

Kind of a shame, kinda relieving, actually, just relieving after all…

"Even if it can read the detailed movement from individuals, realistic speaking, it only gets the flow lines. To reduce the general data volume for analysis. Even if it was grasping far above the sky that we're together, it

wouldn't be to the point to get if we were hugging or killing each other. Just that we're in the same place."

This is also like the mold then, huh.

Even if they could control the movement of the mold across the labyrinth, it wouldn't get their feelings. Do they have feelings? Mold? And humans too?

"…Perhaps, even if, super perhaps, I… who am Mom's daughter, if I were a computer super engineer and succeeded in doing maintenance in the 'Kunagisa' Satellite, even then, we wouldn't be able to know how Chika-chan and 'someone' arrived in this room then?"

"Yes. …Last night I felt like "what is it with this girl, putting in airs", but I trust you know, Hii-sama wasn't lying."

If she says that, Too-chan was the one who told lies in the report to Uncle Nao, though… But I'm glad she believes me. Finally, someone who believes me appeared.

However…

"…Too-chan. How serious were you?

"When?"

"'I wonder how you can assert that you don't have digital literacy if you've never touched a machine.'"

"Your imitation pisses me off… I didn't say it in such an unpleasant way, even if it was when I was pretending to be a genius. It should have been a bit more lovable."

"I wonder. Then, how serious were you?"

"I just instigated. I wasn't serious. I was just kidding."

She said with a bitter smile, or rather, in a shy way… This now was actually lovable. So she can smile like that after opening her heart. I would love to see it from close forever, but that's not it…

"If I could fix the 'Kunagisa' satellite like Grandpa Rui asked… The culprit could be easily identified too, right?"

"…If I made you think that by saying unnecessary stuff twice, then stop."

Too-chan carefully chose her words.

She didn't say I couldn't do it, or that no one knows what would happen, but rather, she asked me to stop.

And then she looked at the headless corpse.

“You don’t need to go that far for my sister, for your cousin.”

She said.

“I would do the same for anyone. I won’t give special treatment to anyone.”

Dad’s Nonsense Series - No. 39.

Move. Not for anyone’s sake. Not because of anyone’s fault.

Although, entering the Kunagisa Syndicate and controlling all mankind with the satellites Mom has built to solve a murder crime is going too far, no matter what. If I borrowed Grandpa Rui’s words, the cost performance would be the worst.

That’s why I was planning to use the satellites somehow without Grandpa Rui and the others, in other words, without the organization knowing, but…

Mom’s Absolute Law

Don’t touch machines.

The reality is, if someone raised for fifteen years deep in the mountains, relying solely on spring water, suddenly discovered the ocean due to a tectonic shift, could they just swim butterfly stroke all of a sudden? I feel that to stand by silently while watching forest people jump off cliffs while they say “I’ve never drowned once in my life” would be contrary to human morals.

That’s why, not only I wouldn’t be able to deal with it at all, but it’s also obvious the only result would be Mom getting mad at me. After living in a dormitory for months and finally being able to go back home, to be completely scolded by my mother would be a summer memory even worse than being kidnapped.

But on the other hand, if I’m going to fail anyway, it would be fine as long as Mom doesn’t get to know that I did it, maybe.

“Even if I violated Mom’s rule here, she wouldn’t be able to tell, right? Long has passed since she was at her prime, so even if she saw me touching the microscope glass slide, she would just think like ‘aah, science homework, huh’.”

“You’re really a bad kid, aren’t you?”

“Do you have it? Now. Too-chan. The glass slide.”

“I have it, but… Couldn’t you stop calling it a glass slide? This single device costs about 170 million yen.”

Damn, that's expensive.

Even if it wasn't an artificial satellite's remote control, if something like this gets lost, Uncle Nao should get desperate and search for it no matter what, shouldn't he?

"Please don't think I'm saying this because if Hii-sama had the talent by nature to use machines and fixed the satellites with that innate disposition, then I would lose my job and the meaning of my birth, okay?"

After stating this firstly, she said:

"You should definitely stop with it. Breaking Kunagisa Tomo's rule is not what someone sane would do."

She's saying the opposite of what she said yesterday… And to think of it, hugging her like this is a scene I wouldn't expect after facing her through the prison's bars last night.

"She did say she would kill me if I touched a machine in fact, though."

"My sister just got killed, I don't want you to die too. Just when we cousins started getting along."

"We'll be together at death."

"We didn't get along that far. It has been just 5 minutes."

"Not going against one's parents for 15 years is actually weird, isn't it? I'm sure Mom will be happy with my terrible twos."

"What do you mean with terrible twos being at 15 years old. That was how she was disowned, right? Hii-sama's mom."

"I got it. You want me to sneakily take your glass slide from you then. Then Too-chan won't have any responsibility for it."

"No, even if you take it sneakily, I think I will be erased… By the Kunagisa Syndicate Erasure Department."

"How do you take off a twelve-layered kimono?"

"Wait, Hii-sama, you're doing the same thing the murderer—"

"I'm sorry to interrupt your enjoyment time."

While I was flirting with my cousin, the sliding door that Too-chan had closed was opened, and the maid-san slipped in. Oh no, was knocking a foreign custom then?

"Ah, hello, Bonbori-san…"

"Jun-sama. It seems you've already found a new candidate for a younger

sister, that's great. Please keep going. A low priority as a mere maid like me will tell the job-related report without interfering in your enjoyment."

She's quite on edge while making a composed face.

Does she think I'm an imaginary-little-sister enthusiast who treats everyone (every girl) like a little sister?

I thought I would have Too-chan to say an excuse for this situation, but my cousin's facial expression became composed right when the *fusuma* door was opened, with empty eyes, facing a random direction, as if she were seeing something an amateur couldn't, and then:

"Uni."

She muttered.

She entered the genius imitation mode in seconds. It's as if she's saying this hug is being forced upon her… This is amazing in its own way, huh.

"That's not it, Bonbori-san, please, listen. Well, well, solving your misunderstanding from now on seems pretty fun. It seems we'll be able to have a nice reconciliation too."

"Jun-sama, unfortunately there's no time to spend with someone like me. An urgent matter has come up."

That's blunt.

However, she doesn't seem to be just sulking. If she said it's an urgent matter, then it means it's an urgent matter.

"…What happened?"

"A head."

Bonbori-san said that in a straightforward manner, without mixing her emotions in it. Since, just as she recommended, I was still hugging Too-chan, I felt her pulsation directly. Her genius pretending was perfect, however — from what it seems, she can't hide her disturbance completely.

And it was the same for me.

"Chika-sama's head, clothes, and her personal device Nao-sama was searching for too — they were all thrown together inside a well close to the small castle tower."

"Inside a well…?"

It's a hard place to find… But it's not a passing mark in what comes to a hiding place one wouldn't want to be found no matter what. Since it's hard to be found, it would just be postponed, but it would absolutely be a target for

search at some point. For some people, this might be the very first place they would look… In terms of mystery, it's definitely not a place like in "The Purloined Letter".

It's not a blind spot at all.

It's a highlight of this World Heritage site.

"Was the personal device okay?"

Too-chan asked Bonbori-san.

Checking the work tool status before Chika-chan's head's situation… Is it part of the genius pretending too?

No.

It's a normal feeling to not want to know the condition of her identical twin sister's severed head, to postpone it… An extremely normal feeling. It wouldn't be weird even if she asked about how dirty the *yukata* was before asking about the head.

"Unfortunately, it was completely broken."

I just realized, but now that I looked at her properly, Bonbori-san didn't have her apron with her, and her maid clothes were dirty here and there, some parts in various places were loose too… It seems she didn't just shine a light on all the stuff in the well from afar, but also that she used a rope to rappel down there to retrieve them with her own hands.

Well, if she was doing such physical labor while I was flirting with my cousin, no matter how much of a skilled maid she was, she would be put off.

"It seems it was thrown off quite roughly… So both interior and exterior are believed to be beyond repair."

"…Right."

Too-chan nodded silently. Even if she isn't Kunagisa Tomo herself, she's a girl made based on Mom — so she obviously understood. Even though she didn't want to, she understood.

If this is the machine's condition.

She didn't even need to ask about the condition of the head that was thrown there as well. Nothing good would come from asking.

"……"

However… What does it mean? To be honest, these things that were taken from the crime scene, the way they were hidden and treated was too crude… It feels like "well, this will disrupt the scenery here, so let me just hide it

somewhere aside".

If there was a headless body, it would be normal to think the culprit had some reason to do it, like facial authentication or even hair donation, and that would be why they took the head with them… However, it was thrown off almost as if it were a tuna head, because it's difficult to cook it…

At any rate, does it then mean that Nao-san's worry — not as a father but as a businessman — was needless? The personal device was broken, and even for the head, it probably wasn't in a situation to be used in facial authentication. While hugging the bereaved sister more than was needed, I thought.

I thought. I thought. I thought I thought I thought I thought.

I thought I thought I thought I thought I thought I thought I thought.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 50.

Keep thinking for all your life.
Do it while being aware that the answer won't come.

"Although I am very sorry for it, I must ask you two for the head's identity confirmation. That was the reason for my visit… Since Nao-sama is busy, and both Rui-sama and Hoda-sama won't leave the top floor."

I heard Bonbori-san's voice as if it were coming from afar — identity confirmation.

Indeed, even if facial authentication wasn't possible, a confirmation from someone close would be needed… Or else, we couldn't be sure that the chance of being the head of someone completely different is zero. I'm personally tired of all that stuff about switching places. However, to force a twin to see a face just like hers in a severed head…

"Then, I will…"

"It's fine, Hii-sama. I will do it."

Firmly.

Or rather, behaving like she didn't feel anything, she stood up. Since I was still hugging her, I ended up standing too. Well, sure, since I just met her yesterday, I wouldn't be able to properly do the identity check, though… Too-chan's heartbeat had already calmed down.

The blue hair and blue eyes are not just for show. To the extent that it's painful to look at.

"…I see. But can I go with you?"

"If you promise you won't scream 'Too-chan! Too-chan'"

“You really had to imitate that, huh.”

“Then, Chiga, please show us the way. Do we just need to go to that well?”

“No, I couldn’t let it as it was, after all, so I placed it safely in the western wing of the castle.”

“Uni. So let’s go sightseeing at the Hyakken Hallway[69] then.”

Even if it was part of acting like a genius, that’s quite a harsh sarcasm, it may have even hurt herself when she said it.

However, with this sarcasm, I ended up having this shot in the dark, this idea about “what if the culprit’s goal was to make a mess of this World Heritage Kunagisa Castle?” Not bad for a wild guess, I would say.

I was angry — even though I’m not a local — wondering why they would do something like this at this World Heritage site, but what if *this was exactly* their goal?

You wouldn’t look at the well the same way after knowing a head was thrown there, and even for this guest room, no matter how much it could be cleaned in every corner, or if you replaced the tatami stained with blood, it wouldn’t erase the fact that a headless corpse of a 13-year-old girl was there.

Not for the sake of artificial satellites or human clones, but just for decreasing the number of tourists visiting here… If it was more than cutting heads, if it was also about cutting profits… No way, is it a Nijou Castle’s agent? A Nijou Castle’s—

“…*Nijou — Castle*?”

As I was about to place the apron in Chika-chan’s headless corpse once again before leaving the room — my hand stopped.

My thoughts stopped too.

It’s not like I want to go against Dad’s Nonsense — but I didn’t need to. Not anymore.

“Hii-sama? What’s wrong? Let’s go.”

“No… You don’t need to do it anymore. Bonbori-san too.”

As usual, I held them back, since they left the room before me, and said that.

“Rather than that, please gather everyone. Everyone, at the castle’s top.”

“At the castle’s top? Everyone from the Kunagisa Household, you mean?”

The apprentice maid didn’t hide her surprise at my unreasonable request.

My cousin's genius pretending broke down a bit too.

"Hii-sama, are you serious?"

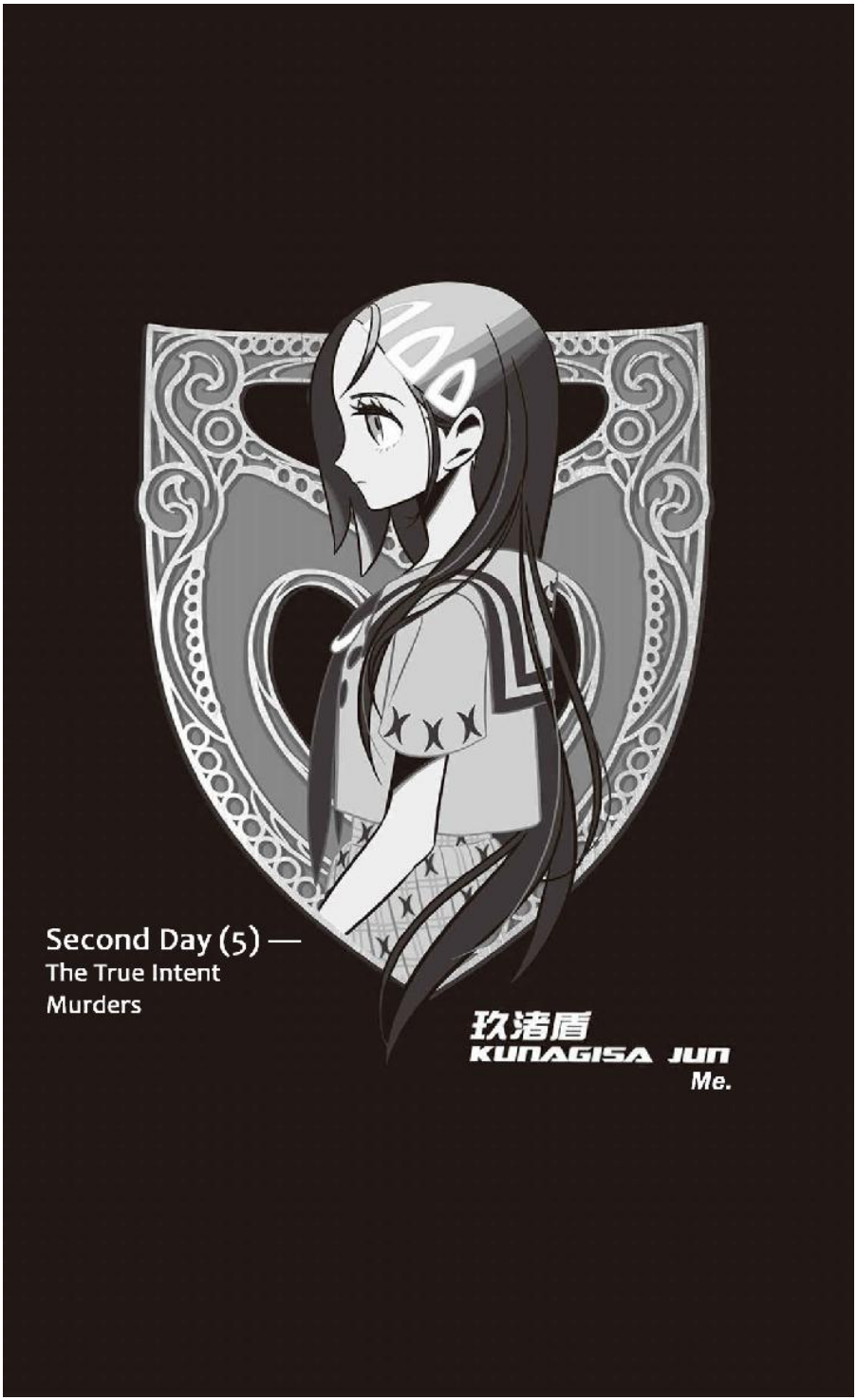
Of course.

I'm serious about it.

3

The conclusion arc starts in the next chapter.

The thirteenth step is steep, so please watch your neck's bottom[70].



Second Day (5) — The True Intent Murders[71]

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Take it as a trick and try tricking.[72]

(Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 47)

1

As someone who normally grieved the death of a normal girl, I'll say a really normal thing, but the mystery novels' crime-solving scenes just aren't sane. Is it time to be saying "gather everyone"? Just go call the police already, and the culprit who goes there together with everyone really has a lack of sense of danger.

If I got an invitation from a great detective, the smart decision would be to avoid it saying "well, I will go if I manage to", and then proceed to go through the proper steps to escape overseas. On the other hand, to say "good grief, even though I'm so busy, what is this farce about? That's the last time, okay?" is nothing more than a typical *tsundere*'s words, and it doesn't seem like they would do something bad.

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 27.

Don't be noticed by the truth you noticed.

If we follow our boring reality, the standard practice would be to form a sieging group and collect evidence before the culprit even notices it.

Although, when it comes to this case only, there's no chance of the culprit fleeing. Not a tiny bit. If anything, I'm the one who wants to flee… Because not only the Kunagisa Syndicate won't report it to the police, but they also completely intended to cover this incident. There's a risk that even if they were caught, someday they might just be released, and if the great detective starts making a fuss about it, perhaps he might be the one to go to jail — and I think this is exactly where I can take advantage of the situation.

And that's why, without collecting evidence, without getting supporting evidence for it, I recklessly gave a speech — as Kunagisa Tomo's daughter.

Or rather, as the Nonsense User's Daughter.

2

It was a unreasonable request, and it didn't follow any proper steps too,

but, in the end, Bonbori-san gathered everyone. It took some time, and for Uncle Nao, who was expecting an outsider culprit, his rescheduling was especially hard to do, but since the glass slide and the severed head were found in a World Heritage's well, it seems the priority for his theory was lowered. It seems that the motive for Kunagisa Chika being killed wasn't some other company wanting to hack the artificial satellite "Kunagisa". Then, why was that 13-year-old girl killed?

…To be quite honest, even now, I don't know this crime's motive. I have no idea why "that person" did something like this… Not only I don't know, but it's also incomprehensible.

That can also be said as a reason for giving a speech.

To make it comprehensible.

A moment ago, when I treated Too-chan as the true culprit, although I tried hard to be like the type of detective that doesn't care about crimes' motives, I just couldn't. That's why my only choice is to have the culprit I'll name explain it directly to me… I can only put my hopes up for the culprit's speech after the opening act, which is the great detective's speech.

I can do nothing but pray that the culprit doesn't exercise their right to remain silent.

And so, the top of the castle tower.

The Kunagisa family, plus the maid-san, plus me.

Across the bamboo-blind, the Honorary Syndicate Head: Kunagisa Rui. Also across a bamboo blind, her voice which I yet haven't heard, the Castle's Master: Kunagisa Hoda. The current Syndicate Head and the highest in the Kunagisa Syndicate's hierarchy, and also Mom's older brother: Kunagisa Nao. The one whose twin sister was killed, the blue-haired and blue-eyed human clone: Kunagisa Too. The maid family's trueborn: Chiga Bonbori.

The Blue Savant and Nonsense User's daughter: Kunagisa Jun.

I am Kunagisa Jun. A proud shield.

"Thank you all very much for gathering here today. From now on, I will present a likely hypothesis for the truth of my cousin, Kunagisa Chika's murder incident, so please listen quietly. I would be most grateful if you could share your candid opinions with me—"

Wait. Although I'm the one saying it, it's a bit too formal, isn't it?

I feel like I failed at how I started talking. The feeling is not as in a school presentation, and for starters, I can't really say the atmosphere is comfortable.

Bonbori-san, who set up this place, was looking at me worried, and Too-chan — which, as a Kunagisa Tomo's clone, is looking to a random direction as

if she were seeing something others couldn't, as part of her way to act like a genius — may be with her heart throbbing now… I didn't tell them what that likely hypothesis was, so I didn't verify its likelihood.

A measure as caution for information leak, devoting in keeping it secret — it actually wasn't something like that. In the end, although I think it might be self-conceiting, I want to prevent *the second incident* from happening.

Something like Too-chan being killed after Chika-chan must not happen, no matter what — and to be frank, I don't want to get killed either.

Uncle Nao is looking at me from the side while smiling kindly… Maybe he got some leeway after it stopped being a worry related to world peace. Perhaps his mood was as if he came to see his cute niece's school arts festival.

For how long his leeway will continue is really something worth seeing.

Just like this morning, they were sitting in a circle at the castle tower's top floor (Bonbori-san is the only one out, standing behind me), but in terms of positioning, I was facing Grandpa Rui. I wonder what he is thinking, watching his grandchild that started playing mystery novel's detective… Maybe he is not perceiving me as a grandchild, but rather as a young head of a new start-up about to present a sales pitch.

And in what comes to Grandma Hoda, she was:

"……
……
……"

It may be indiscreet towards my own grandmother, or rather, towards Mom's mom, but maybe she's dead at the other side of the bamboo blind.

There's also the possibility of it being just a giant doll being placed there… Actually, to say it in terms of mystery novels, it's also a red herring.

A character that is listed in the characters' introduction but doesn't actually show up… Does Mom's twin brother, Kunagisa En, follow that pattern too? If I were a proper great detective, I would have been manipulated by it, for sure.

I'm glad I'm not a proper great detective.

"There are all sorts of elements and mysteries in this incident, but to get to the bottom of it, what we must solve is the question of why Chika-chan was decapitated."

That is to say, I don't have more leeway here.

Leeway.

The biggest reason why Bonbori-san succeeded at gathering everyone like

this is that there's the leeway of always being able to "if she says something weird, we can just erase her". Not for the culprit, but for this Kunagisa Syndicate, so if I make a single word selection mistake, there's a chance I might get beheaded right here.

They would have the right to kill me at any time after giving this speech.

Did Dad walk through such tightropes…? Well, it seems Dad didn't give much of these crime solving speeches as I imagine… It seems he would often debut his solutions while hospitalized, chatting with the nurse.

I want to be hospitalized soon too.

"Uncle Nao theorized that the reason behind them cutting off his daughter's head was maybe for facial authentication. His theory proposed that, to unlock the glass slide… I'm sorry, the personal device, the culprit needed to have her head for the facial authentication."

Then, I looked at Uncle Nao and then at Bonbori-san in turns.

"However, by both the head and the device being found at the well's bottom, this hypothesis A was completely denied."

Although I said that, Uncle Nao didn't seem to be offended, but he didn't seem to be ashamed either. That's what one would expect from his personality. As for me, when my theory went wrong, I prostrated myself and apologized, though… But I must say it after all.

"The hypothesis B was about the culprit wanting blue hair, which is the proof of being a 'special child', the hair donation theory. Or also it could be that the culprit would want the blue eyes iris for a transplant, maybe."

It's not like I especially put it on airs, but I wasn't sure about revealing I suspected Too-chan only, so I made it as if the blue eyes could be a target too.

And that's how history can be distorted.

…Well, actually, even if it weren't Too-chan, there may be maniacs who would want "Kunagisa Tomo's" blue eyes or blue hair that shines sparkling as the sea.

From what I've heard from Dad, Mom really hated taking baths in her hacker age, so instead of shining, her long hair would actually be greasy, and as her relative, I end up thinking that her eyes, which would look constantly at the computer's screen, may have been clouded from the blue light… Just like Chika-chan wasn't a fairy, Mom wasn't a fairy either.

"But if they only wanted things like hair or eyes, they could just cut her hair or gouge her eyeballs. There was no need to cut and take the whole head with them. That's why hypothesis B is rejected too."

It ended up like something I just said for the sake of being rejected, but in

reality, this hypothesis B came to nothing after I directly pulled Too-chan's hair. Stop it, Too-chan, don't look at me with those eyes as if you were looking at a dirty adult.

I'm only lying to protect you… No, it's to protect myself. However, it's also true that there's no reason to allow someone mentioning twins switching places and making the conversation complicated.

"If so, what in the world is it about? My grandchild. Although I'm hearing this because it will be easier to cover it up if we have a clear culprit, to be honest, I don't care at all about the reason for the head being cut, though… Rather than that, wouldn't you move on to the main subject, the maintenance of the artificial satellites?"

It's not like his legs got tired because the introduction was long and then he got impatient (and I don't think he is sitting in *seiza* too), but Grandpa Rui interjected like that.

The artificial satellites, huh.

They will come up later.

However — more important than that or than anything —, the reason why the head was cut off must be made clear, no matter what. Because it's the only way to determine the culprit.

"…The hypothesis C is a bit absurd, but it is about the chance of the culprit's true goal not being Chika-chan herself, but actually this World Heritage Kunagisa Castle."

I wanted it now to be the moment when the audience reacts to it like "What!? What do you mean!?", but they were silent, everyone.

The great detectives' hearts are strong, aren't they?

It feels like randomly talking to myself in front of an audience that's not being amused at all… Actually, this hypothesis C is close to a gag. It's not an expression I like, but it feels like the Japanese mystery genre "stupid mystery"… I would appreciate it if they just laughed it off.

However, it connects to hypothesis D, so it's a necessary path to follow.

"Beheading someone in a Japanese castle tower does feel old-fashioned, however, their motive was to make a grotesque murder incident to lower this place's value as a tourist attraction. Or rather, the goal was to eventually strip the qualification of this Kunagisa Castle being a World Heritage."

I thought that now would be the time Grandma Rui, the Castle's Master, would say something, so I glanced at the figure across the bamboo blind, but it was a non-reaction even bigger than I imagined.

If she didn't react now, I can't expect her to say anything even when I

present hypothesis D, and although it was a business talk, I can't help but feel that the narrow interaction I had with the grandfather can't be expected between me and this grandmother here.

It can't be helped.

It seems it doesn't matter if it's about classmates or relatives, getting along well with everyone might just not be possible.

"…However, even if a grotesque murder happened, we can't be sure if the number of tourists would decrease. Rather than that, maybe it would attract interest, and tourists would be gathering in crowds."

If a mass murder happens, then it would be a different story, though… But that's why this hypothesis C is just a delusion I had after being cornered. And besides, even if a mass murder happened.

"Just like Grandpa Rui said, if the Kunagisa Syndicate covers it up, then it would be as if the murder never happened, and it would have no consequences. Although there's a chance someone related to the Nijou Castle envied the Kunagisa Castle's value as a World Heritage and planned that, its feasibility is zero."

"It's not like we can sweep everything under the rub, you know? Even nobles like us—"

Now Uncle Nao interjected. He let me do as I pleased this far, but maybe he started worrying about the conclusion already.

Or maybe I made him think something like "she has been speaking quite leisurely this far, but does she really have anything in mind?"

"—Unlike my father, I worry about the reason why my noble daughter's head was cut. Could you tell us already, Jun-san? You feel the same, right, Too?"

"…Uni."

Even when next to her father, Too-chan still acts like a genius. She will keep doing so — for her whole life.

"…I'm concerned about how Hii-sama mentioned quite abruptly Kyoto's Nijou Castle. Is it because as someone from Kyoto, the first thing that comes to mind when talking about castles is the Nijou Castle?"

Sharp, huh.

Even if she pretends, she is a genius after all — she isn't average. Or rather, it might be her way of assisting me somehow. If so, that was a killer pass.

"Yes. That is to say, it is not really related to the Nijou Castle. The castle

tower did burn in fact, but for what it comes to its historical value, the Nijou Castle is a worldwide famous spot too—"

Oops, the love for my hometown slipped.

It's not that.

"—However, exactly as Too-chan said, the fact that, as a Kyoto citizen, the first thing that came to my mind was the Nijou Castle led me to the hypothesis D. Nijou Castle — Nijou — *Nijou*[73]."

I placed my hands on the floor.

The floor — more accurately, the tatami mats laid out across it.

Dad says he used to live in a four-tatami-mat apartment, but it's not like it was actually laid with tatami mats. Even for the underground prison in this castle, it wasn't laid with tatami mats either. However, just like this castle's top floor, the guest room prepared for me, as well as the waiting room we went to at first, all had tatami-mats layered on them, like a Japanese-style inn.

"*While awake, half a tatami; when asleep, one tatami*[74] — Chika-chan's corpse was not on the bed, it was placed lying directly on the tatami. The bleeding from the cut section soaked it… In terms of cleaning, one tatami-mat must be replaced."

"…Are you saying this was their goal, Hii-sama? To stain a tatami-mat in a World Heritage and lower its value?"

"No, that's not it. The important thing it's that *the replacement can be done with just one mat*, Too-chan."

I ended up going out of my formal tone for a moment, so I cleared my throat and then, I explained it.

"In short, Chika-chan's head was cut off *to make her body fit the size of one tatami-mat*."

3

Dad's Nonsense Series - No. 88.

Long ago, the saying "he who makes fun of one yen will cry at one yen" was actually "he who makes fun of one *sen* will cry at one *sen*"[75]. Although this proverb was changed to match the current money value, isn't it exactly what a person who laughs at one *sen* would do?

Maybe even Dad was afraid of shortening a proverb from ancient times, but, as a result, this ended up as the longest Nonsense in the whole series, but

well, that's how it is.

While awake, half a tatami; when asleep, one tatami.

It's a saying from long ago, but, if so, then it must be updated to current times. To these current times where people's heights keep increasing. The size needed to be adjusted, so it wouldn't stick out, so it could fit.

Not of the tatami mat, but of the human body.

The girl who was raised at the nutrition conditions provided by Kunagisa Syndicate's management, taller than Mom, who is her origin, the blue girl's… downsizing.

"What? Then, are you saying the culprit cut off her head to avoid as much as possible staining the World Heritage tatami-mats, to reduce the number of mats they would stain?"

Too-chan slightly lifted her hips and said that. Although she's still acting like a genius, even then, it seems she couldn't remain silent to a hypothesis that gave such a reason for cutting her sister's head.

Even though we finally got along well, she may end up cutting off her ties with me. That was a turn of events I was afraid of.

"This is contradicting, Hii-sama. If they didn't want to stain tatami-mats, they wouldn't need to cut off her head to start with."

"And if you say that, maybe they wouldn't need to kill her to start with."

And then, Uncle Nao came to my rescue. However, there was still no guarantee that this rescue ship would not be a sinking ship.

"Because even if they didn't do a corpse mutilation, just by killing someone, some kind of evidence will remain. It wouldn't even require forensics, the traces of killing someone… At any rate, the tatami-mat would be wasted. Just like a place still needs cleaning when someone living in it by himself dies alone."

It was almost as if he had deep knowledge in the lonely deaths of people living alone.

The child who was confined for ten years in the underground cell…

There's the "I won't be able to die on a tatami" idiom, which refers to not being able to have a peaceful death, and I think it applies to me as well, but if you asked a special cleaning professional, they would say to try to avoid it. Even if there's no bleeding, things like decomposition and liquefaction, and the body fluids as well, they will completely soak the tatami-mat, and if it takes long before discovering the body, it will end up beyond repair.

"Please wait, Jun-sama. If so, isn't it as if I, who am in charge of cleaning,

have paradoxically cut her head so it would make the cleanup a bit easier?"

"No, that's not it. That's completely wrong, Bonbori-san. I also wanted to avoid this misunderstanding. I know the best you don't have such a lazy heart."

She's the person who crawled on all fours with no hesitation so she could function as an operating table for my treatment. There's no way she would downsize the corpse just to slack off on her work.

Then, I switched gears and continued the conversation.

"However, there is no doubt the culprit wanted to avoid dirtying the crime scene as much as he could. Why was Chika-chan's *yukata* removed? Since it was a 13-year-old girl stripped naked, it may end up making someone think of a bizarre motive, but taking off her clothes wasn't the main goal, but rather, wasn't the true reason for it to wrap her up as if to cover the corpse? To cover the beheading section."

Not to strip her naked, but to cover and wrap her up.

The reason why she wasn't wearing any underwear was simply because it was Japanese clothing… It's a traditional thing. To think of it, in the time when Mom had short hair, she would just wear a coat without any underwear. Maybe that was the tradition Chika-chan inherited.

"As if to pack the severed head with the *yukata*, so it wouldn't dirty the place. In that moment, it would result in jumbling inside it the glass slide — the personal device she carried close with her inside her *yukata* as well, making a mess with all of that. But then, they would be able to put it all together as if it were a burrito, then take it off the crime scene and throw it off into the well's bottom."

Saying "throw it off" might be an improper choice of words towards the victim and a verbal slip too, but, from the culprit's perspective, it would be the most suitable way to say it.

A headless body. A severed head.

To someone who would only see them as dirt — as nothing but dirt.

Although I stressed it being a death of a human many times this far, not of a fairy or a doll, when it comes to this point, the one whose opinion most resembles that is the culprit.

They perceive the corpse as nothing more than a corpse — it smells, rots, hardens, decay, it gets damaged, it gets in the way, and it's hard to be disposed.

A person's dead body is not a person.

That's why — it's not treated as one.

“Hmm. This is starting to get a little interesting.”

Grandpa Rui said his impressions, which were inhuman in their own way too — well no, maybe they’re still human-like after all.

Having his own granddaughter killed and not simply being filled with grief like the usual good-natured old man isn’t necessarily because he’s an influential figure in the Kunagisa family and a “master”.

If you look at it broadly, it’s also the sensitivity of a commoner.

It’s not just old people who consume the news daily feeling that others’ misfortune is sweet as honey, since high school girls, sensitive to trends, are just the same. The difference is just that now is a relative’s misfortune — and by giving a speech like this, depending on how you look at it, I also would be seen as nothing more than someone making fun out of it.

However.

I’m serious about it.

“You got me interested now, grandchild. However, if you say the head wasn’t cut off to minimize the cleaning area, why did the culprit downsize your cousin? I thought the reason for the beheading was useless, but suddenly it got me thinking.”

“That’s a good presentation this far”, he praised.

He’s thinking of this as a presentation after all… Well, that’s fine. It’s more of a self-righteousness than a presentation too. It’s even hypocritical.

“The culprit’s motto was ‘while awake, half a tatami; when asleep, one tatami; being dead and one tatami’.”

I said. While looking at everyone once again.

Kunagisa Rui. Kunagisa Hoda. Kunagisa Nao. Kunagisa Too.

Bonbori Chiga. And then me, Kunagisa Jun.

The culprit it’s between us.

“If there is any benefit to confine a murder within the space of a single tatami mat, besides narrowing the cleanup area, it is because a tatami is a movable floor.

A movable floor.

It’s something that, after saying it myself, I may end up even laughing at it, but I stiffened my face — because now is the essential part.

“I said before that it would be needed to replace the tatami-mat, but on the

other hand, being able to be switched is an advantage of tatami-mats. That's why — the culprit switched it."

The tatami-mat.

In other words — the crime scene.

"Although it was a headless corpse, there was no twins swapping trick. The culprit took not only Chika-chan's headless corpse, but *the whole crime scene* and replaced it."

I recalled the time when Bonbori-san brought the antibiotics with water so I could drink it, with both placed in the wooden tray — in short, just like that tray, the truth is that the corpse was placed on the tatami and transported with it.

Not to accurately move the corpse.

But to dynamically move the crime scene.

"It felt weird that Chika-chan was killed in the guest room reserved to me. It was a mystery that inevitably paled in comparison to things like she being naked, decapitated, and the head taken away, and then it ended up being put off, though…"

Maybe it was postponed because there was a clear solution where "I was the culprit", as Too-chan pointed out. Maybe I was the only one to think of this mystery as a mystery because I knew I was innocent.

"However, those mysteries were closely related to each other. Chika-chan wasn't killed in the guest room to start with. It's just that, after being killed in some other room, she was carried along with the evidence-filled tatami-mat."

I've heard that the container is one of the greatest inventions of mankind. In global trade, standardizing widely diverse items' transportation into blocks was a Copernican revolution… Even in modern online shopping, standardizing cardboard box sizes makes them easier to load onto trucks. Although it may seem unreasonable to use a whole box for just one battery, it's actually the embodiment of rational when viewed as a whole.

The standardized size known as a tatami.

And the beheading for the sake of fitting the body in it. The guillotine for the sake of fitting it not in Nijou, not in two tatamis[76], but rather, in one single tatami-mat. They were able to downsize a luggage that was too large to fit into the cardboard box.

Instead of folding it unnaturally, they preferred to just cut it off.

It's one tatami mat and one corpse, so, naturally, that adds up to

considerable weight, so cutting off the head would be a considerable weight reduction. Maybe it was practical reasoning when downsizing, choosing to cut the head rather than the feet. Of course, just as one wouldn't cram the items into a cardboard box to the brim for shipping, they probably wanted to leave some space in the tatami-mat too. That's undoubtedly why they cut it a bit larger than necessary as well…

They didn't take away the head and the glass slide, they placed the headless corpse into the vacant guest room — together with the whole crime scene.

As for the severed head they had with them, it could be disposed of however they wanted, as it was a size that allowed it. Since they only needed to move it out from the crime scene, there wasn't any deep meaning for them in throwing it into a deep well. Even if it were quickly discovered, or even if it weren't, there would be no problem.

"Of course, the tatami-mat removed from the guest room was moved to the place where the crime actually happened, so it could fill the space left. Like a puzzle piece…"

"So, what's exactly the real place where it happened?"

Too-chan asked with a serious face this time, without saying "uni". Even if it's not part of her genius pretending, as someone from the Kunagisa household, she wouldn't make an extremely ordinary reaction like "That's too cruel! Doing a hideous thing such as cutting off the head of a human being for such a reason!".

Although she could just do it and make things easier for herself.

"There might be one in any place inside this Kunagisa Castle. Actually, it's not even limited to the Kunagisa Castle, maybe. Then, even in Kyoto's Nijou Castle, if I remember correctly, there must be legit tatami-mats too."

"If so, all Japanese-style rooms across Japan may be a candidate for the murder scene. No, that's wrong. The tatami-mat size differs between western Japan, middle Japan, and eastern Japan. In other words, we can narrow it to the culprit being someone residing in western Japan then."

It seems Uncle Nao still has enough leeway to be telling jokes… As for Too-chan, even if you bring up Nijou Castle this much, it's not going to help me.

It was just a trigger for the reasoning.

"No, there's no need to extend the search area this much. There's no need to extend it to western Japan, not even to Kyoto, or actually, not even to all Kunagisa Castle's territory… After all, even if it was used as a replacement for a tray or for a stretcher, it's still a tatami-mat after all."

It can't be moved across floors.

I said as I looked at the stairs to the top floor we climbed — rather than stairs, due to its steep angle, it was more like a ladder who didn't take accessibility into account at all, much less even imagined corpse transportation. It would be dangerous even to climb it piggybacking.

"Although it's not a question like how do they enter a blackboard into a classroom, there would be no way to transport a tatami through them without carrying it vertically. However, if they did so, the headless body placed on the tray would slip and fall off. And binding it wouldn't be possible since it would leave marks. So, the tatami-mat that could replace the one used for placing the headless corpse on it can't be from any of Odawara Castle, Nagoya Castle, Nijou Castle, Marugame Castle, Fukuyama Castle or Kumamoto Castle, but only from a room in the Kunagisa Castle's tower third floor."

"Please, wait, Jun-sama."

Bonbori-san says once again.

With the exact same tone as of a moment ago.

"If so, wouldn't it mean then that I — who was the only one sleeping in the same floor as the guest room where Jun-sama originally would sleep, so, as your personal maid, I could be called by you at any time — am the very culprit who cruelly severed the head of Chika-sama, a descendant of the Kunagisa family, to whom I vowed to be loyal to, merely because it would make it easier to be carried around?"

"Yes. You are the culprit, Bonbori-san."

4

When she pressed me saying it made it look like she cut off the head so the cleaning would be easier, I really got worried. The remaining plan almost collapsed. And although I planned to move the speech towards explaining that the true motive was to make Chika-chan's corpse, as well as the crime scene, easier to be moved around, and that the only one able to do that would be Bonbori-san, there's no way I would imagine that the culprit herself would go ahead of me. People really can't be read completely.

If the ideal would be an audience that reacted to the speech, a culprit who keeps silent until being named would also be the ideal — well, anyway.

"You are the culprit, Bonbori-san. Chiga Bonbori-san."

"What a heartless thing to say. I'm deeply sorrowful. And although I devoted myself that much. Although I thought of Jun-sama as my real older sister."

She started to appeal to my emotions…

Although she is being treated as the real culprit, her composed looks didn't change, she just frowned a little bit sadly… It hurts my heart a lot. It ends up as me saying once more what I just said this noon, but I won't ever do it again, a speech like this. Seriously, how you used to do something like this, Dad?

I'll end up respecting you.

"Then, following your expectations, please allow me to say some words typical of a culprit, though. Is there any proof of it? Or rather, is your reasoning that it is easier to incriminate someone outside the Kunagisa main family as me?"

"I'm not a fool as well, so while you were making the preparations for this, I at least put the effort to compare the coloring of the tatami-mats in both rooms. Because there's a certain way an antique tatami would be faded by the sunlight."

"Is that so? However, even if the tatami-mats at both rooms were in fact swapped, doesn't it prove only that someone placed Chika-sama's body in your room after killing her in mine?"

"I didn't say it since it would look like I neglected my duties, but I also couldn't sleep well, so I changed floors and rested there" — if she said that, it would be hard to argue against it. Because I did the same thing.

I think Uncle Nao, Too-chan, and Grandpa Rui and Grandma Hoda who were across the bamboo blind, all had their own different feelings about it, but they were silent watching the conversation between me and Bonbori-san.

An unexpected culprit, probably.

To think that the maid-san, who came from outside, would be the true culprit. Although they probably wouldn't think something like the "servants and cooks cannot be the culprit" rule being applicable nowadays, the people in Kunagisa main house didn't expect such an upset like being killed by an outsider.

I guess what they could barely accept would be the case where I was the culprit, since, although I'm the daughter of the disowned daughter, I'm still a Kunagisa. By its nature, the Kunagisa main house may be a perpetrator, but should never be the victim.

But even then.

Chiga Bonbori — *who was treated as not being there*.

"In the first place, Jun-sama. Why would I do something like that?"

"Even if you ask me that… It's not like I'm particularly thinking you moved the headless body to my guest room to make me the culprit. I think it was probably just that I happened to be away at that time, so it was easier to move it."

Although she did push the body to my room, I don't think she wanted to pin the blame on me… You may say I'm naive, but that's what I think. She didn't direct the suspicion on me…

"No, it's not that. What I'm asking is why would I need to kill Chika-sama?"

Aah, that was her question's meaning — well, that's the thing.

"That's what I wanted to ask. That's why I had you prepare this place. It's not because I wanted to give this speech, it was for you to tell the reason behind this crime."

When I impulsively said Too-chan was the culprit without any plan behind it, I made a huge mistake. It was a great blunder to ignore the motive and just think using some logic. I can't regret it enough.

There's no doubt Bonbori-san is the culprit.

Since the tatami-mats swapping did happen in fact, the possibility of an outsider being the murderer is almost zero. It could be different if I were alone at least, but to do a feat as replacing tatami-mats, with one of them having a headless body on it, without both of us noticing would be impossible.

However, why?

Again and again, I have no idea what the crime's motive was.

Why would a trueborn from the maid family, who serves for generations the Akagami family, one of the Four Gods and One Mirror, need to kill a Kunagisa main house's descendant, and, from all of them, one of the twins who are blue-haired and blue-eyed "special children", clones, and designer babies?

There's no inheritance, no succession disputes, no world peace, no family feuds — seriously, what reason would make someone able to strip and behead a 13-year-old girl?

If it could have been anyone, then why was that 'anyone' Kunagisa Chika?

Not Too-chan — not me.

Or maybe not even Kunagisa Tomo.

"…So, are you saying you went to the trouble of arranging this stage just so you could hear what I had to say? And I told you so many times to stop asking such indelicate questions about people's privacy, though… You are really kind, Jun-sama. Really, if I had an older sister, I am sure she would be like this."

"……"

"But I am not the culprit after all. Even if you ask me the reason, my

heartbeat[77] won't even raise. Not only that, but I may even sue you for defamation, you know?"

That's a tough joke, huh, Bonbori-san.

Aah, but that's no use, huh.

Well, that's true. I was hoping that if I played the detective's role and gave a speech in a mystery-solving scene like this, Bonbori-san, as the criminal (role), would also end up revealing her motive in the momentum, but the norm of reciprocity won't work like that.

If I presented an incontestable proof, it would be different, but I don't have something like that.

Perhaps, the mystery solving should have been on a cliff, following the logic of mystery dramas, rather than mystery novels. Is there a cliff around here? I'm definitely on the edge of a cliff[78] right now.

"Haa…"

Incontestable proof…

There's no other way. Now that things have come up to this point, I have no choice but to play my trump card.

Dad's Nonsense Series — No. 77.

Not having a trump card is the biggest trump card.

Mom's instruction — I will break it for the first time.

I took from the skirt pocket in my Sumiyuri School's uniform the glass slide that Too-chan always carried close with her.

"A-…! This, when…!"

Once Too-chan raised and got on her knees, I quickly turned the front camera to her face. With that, it got unlocked. That's right, there's no need for beheading someone to unlock the facial authentication. Even with the head where it should be, even if she's alive, that's enough to do it.

If we talk about when it happened, it was a moment ago, next to Chika-chan's headless corpse, when we had the friendship hug for the second time. Although Bonbori-san entered the room during the hug, I succeeded at the last moment in taking it off from the twelve-layered kimono's gap.

Hence, if we do a fair depiction of the description trick, at that moment, I had already broken Mom's instruction.

Mom's Absolute Law.

Don't touch machines.

I could feel across the bamboo blind that my grandfather had gotten tense. I didn't get my grandmother's reaction after all, though — oh, right. Originally, just for the sake of making me use this device, he went to the extent of hiring Humanity's Strongest just to bring me to this Kunagisa Castle.

Rejoice, Grandpa.

Your wish has now come true.

"I can present you an incontestable proof if you want, Bonbori-san. The incontestable proof… *the proof that you moved* last night[79]. By operating the nine artificial satellites Mom launched."

The artificial satellite "Kunagisa".

The system that manages all mankind's flow… The surveillance system that puts an end to every conceivable mystery. No matter if it's alibi fabrication, time-misleading tricks, or swapping tricks, the system that literally sees through them all—

Since it's too much of an unfair overtechnology, I didn't want to use it unless there was no other choice, but if Bonbori-san is going to play dumb, then I must use it. I will break the prohibition."

"…If that's the trump card, to be honest, then this is quite disappointing, Jun-sama."

As if she really was let down, Bonbori-san shrugged her shoulders.

"Have you forgotten that I was in your meeting with Master yesterday? Because I followed your request. More than half of functionality of the artificial satellite "Kunagisa" is not working anymore."

"That's right. And I wonder, is it precisely because of that that you thought that now would be your chance?"

"…And besides, your mom didn't castrate you because you are an expert who inherited her superior engineering skills, but actually because she wanted to prevent you from following her path. Oops… forget me using castrate for a girl."

"Excuse me" — she said. But, well, it was a metaphor suitable and easy to understand.

However…

"No way, did you really fall for that, Bonbori-san? Do you really think that Kunagisa Tomo's daughter, Blue Savant's daughter, the Dead Blue's daughter really is a machine illiterate, an allergic to machines?"

"……"

"Why didn't you think that, if it's Kunagisa Tomo's daughter, fixing the degraded satellites and even going back in time and recovering the lost data could be done while humming? That I didn't want to do some easy chores and just pretended to be not only lazy but incompetent and then be able to deny that job… That Mom, who is as if she talked C language from the instant she was born, the reason why she won't let me touch a machine is."—

"Because she feared her own daughter's genius"—

Of course, that's a lie.

Full of lies, a bluff.

Words coming out of my mouth in a centuple-dealing.

To be honest, not only I don't know how I can operate this glass slide in my hands and what will happen from me doing it, but I don't even know which side is the front-side. Although I said I unlocked it with Too-chan's face, I'm not even sure if it was really unlocked. Even if I were holding a true glass slide, I couldn't tell the difference.

Just deceiving eloquence.

Standing, a liar; sitting, a swindler; walking, a sophist.

Kunagisa Tomo's daughter — and the Nonsense User's daughter.

"Please don't make me do something like this, Bonbori-san. I don't want to do something like making you, who was so kind to me, confess by cornering you with brute force. Please, just surrender."

Since I'm a high school girl and not a police officer, telling her to surrender is not the right word choice, but for a decapitation incident, it's a suitable word[80]. I want her to give herself up.

"Bonbori-san. Please."

I said so, bowing my head.

A polite bowing, like how she, who was like a little sister to me, often showed me — and then.

"…That was some good nonsense, but regrettably, it lacked presence."

And.

She laughed — scornfully.

"You can not even compare it — to my father's nonsense, Onee-chan."

“…I told you to stop with it, didn’t I?”

“Yes. Of course, I’m just kidding, Onee-chan—”

And as she said that.

And even then, Bonbori-san, with an elegant footwork, moved to steal the glass slide from me — as if to carry a severed head, as if gracefully dancing—

It was at this moment.

5

“□□□□□□□□□□-!”

Me and Bonbori-san were blown away by a destruction sound as if it tore our ears. It was a shock as if we were knocked hard by a monster that Japan is internationally proud of. I used a vague expression since I wanted a way for showing respect, but it would be vexing if it seemed like I harbor any ill feelings to it, so I will state it clearly, I’m talking about Godzilla. I thought I just got punched by Godzilla. But what threw us to this room’s *fusuma* doors wasn’t a monster suddenly climbing up to land from the Seto Inland Sea, it was only the wind.

What came from the latticed window was the storm named as sound, no, it was a typhoon.

“U—Uni-!?”

In terms of positioning, Bonbori-san and I were the only ones who got hit by the destruction sound, but of course, the sound echoed inside the whole room. The bamboo blind between my grandparents and us was strongly swaying like firecrackers.

“Uni’s hap— what’s happening!?”

Too-chan, the first one to stand up, rushed over the window. That was too careless, since a second wave could come, so I impulsively stood up and followed her — and side-by-side, we looked out the window.

A huge hole had opened up in the Earth.

“What…?”

Or, else… A huge crater appeared in a square in Kunagisa Castle’s outermost region. A part of the circumference had combined with the moat, so a large amount of water was flowing ceaselessly. What the?

Was this Kunagisa Castle bombed? Did I time-slip while I was giving a misdirected speech and drift to the Sengoku period?

No. This isn't a bombing crater. Much less a modern missile attack. That's not it, it's a simpler, but bigger—

"A… A Meteorite?"

Like that one that wiped out the dinosaurs?

No, no, well, they say that a lot of meteorites fall on Earth every year, but most of them burn out in the atmosphere, right? Even with my superficial knowledge, I know that, okay? But of all places, why here, at this time? Did God decide to end the world after seeing my incompetence? Was this world's discontinuance decided?

"Th-that's not it, Hii-sama. It's not a meteorite."

Too-chan said, while looking to the same crater I was looking. She looked to the hole that opened in the Earth and then raised her head and looked up to the sky.

"It's a satellite."

"A satellite?"

"An artificial satellite."

Before I was able to ask "An artificial satellite?", Too-chan took back the glass slide off my hands. Although I was able to completely protect it from Bonbori-san just now, well, no, with this, it just got back to its original owner.

"Hii-sama — what on earth have you done!?"

"E-even if you say that—"

Too-chan was operating the glass slide while sidelong glancing at me, as I was flustered. For me, it was a large number of characters from different languages that I had no idea about being shown in the glass surface; however, even for its owner, Too-chan:

"I-it's not working — it's not accepting any commands at all! The emergency protocol, the automatic processing, the assist function, they're all completely not working — and I can't do a forced shutdown! Although the connection is still on, it's completely out of control—"

It seemed they were also incomprehensible characters to her.

But even then.

"The one that crashed was the fourth satellite 'Shikabane'. However, the remaining eight satellites too, from now on, they will all crash *here* too! In this

Kunagisa Castle!”

The artificial satellites — all nine of them?

Here? As if aiming at us?

“W—why?”

I was dumbfounded.

The quick-witted Uncle Nao was already on the move. It seems he’s planning to evacuate his parents across the bamboo blind as fast as he could — and although it was a powerful situational awareness and quite a survival strategy, even then, it would be too late. They’re not some meteorites falling from the depths of space, but rather, as seen from here, eight artificial satellites that are right there orbiting the Earth, orbiting it to observe humanity, that’s what will fall soon.

“Too — do something! I’m sure you can do it!”

Behind the bamboo blind that was barely keeping its role, Grandpa Rui ordered that as if he was scolding her — like a loud pep talk. Maybe it was the first time in thirteen years that he requested something in this way from her, who was nothing more than his daughter’s fake goods.

But as for Too-chan, of course she didn’t have the leeway to be moved by this. Without even being able to keep her genius imitation, she kept desperately operating the glass slide.

“Hii-sama — what on earth have you done!”

She asked the same question a while ago.

And even if she asks in a stronger tone, my only answer can be:

“It—”

“It broke even though I didn’t do anything!”

It wasn’t a lie. After I took it out of the kimono’s gap, I normally let it in my skirt’s pocket, and when I used the facial authentication just now, I wasn’t even sure if I really unlocked it. In other words, I haven’t done anything. Well, maybe in some impulse I pressed some button somewhere, but there’s no way all nine artificial satellites would fall off with just that, right? There’s no way I could do such a miracle as exploding the TV just by using its remote control.

What type of machine illiterate would make a machine go out of control just by touching it. Even if I had such an absurd power, I’m sure that an adult around me would have stopped me—

Mom's Absolute Law

Don't touch machines.

"— Bonbori-san!"

I entrusted the glass slide handling to Too-chan, no, it was actually because I thought that with things turning up like this, it would be better to take as much distance from the device as possible, so I went back to where the maid-san was, still not being able to stand up after piercing the *fusuma* door.

I grabbed her face that still seemed dumbfounded, as if she didn't get back on her feet after the shockwave, and then I shook her violently. It's an extremely dangerous thing from a medical perspective, but the concept of "safe" didn't exist in this castle tower anymore.

"Bonbori-san! Please tell me the motive! The motive for killing Chika-chan!"

"What…?"

She stared puzzled at me.

"Eight meteors" — or rather — "eight satellites are about to rain down like a storm, and you ask me that?" was what she seemed to want to ask me. And as if to say "what kind of mystery-loving brain do you have?"

However, right now, this is the only thing I can do.

Now, this is the only thing I want to do.

"Are you fine with dying without being able to say the motive!? Are you fine with being burned down to ashes without anyone understanding you, as if you were an insane pervert!? If you tell me, I will understand you in a flash! And what type of person you are too! And what your feelings are too!"

I couldn't talk like Dad would.

But no matter what nonsense you may prattle — I will listen to you, word by word, sound by sound!

"That's why — don't say you didn't do what you did! Because if you deny what you did, you'll deny what you are!"

I felt the second shock wave behind me. The second anthropogenic satellite crashed in Kunagisa Castle already. That's too fast.

And compared to the first one, it felt as if it was closer to us.

Even though it was running wild, it was able to precisely adjust the coordinates. Truly, it lives up to its reputation for tracking every human

movement.

At this rate, the remaining seven satellites will all crash in this castle tower. No, even if they only scrape it, for us inside it, we won't escape this unhurt.

We'll turn into stars.

How terrifying.

I'm about to kill everyone from the Kunagisa family, with no one escaping — and yet, I'm inquiring the maid-san who only killed one person.

"You — your back."

"…? Aah."

I understood after Bonbori-san said it, but at the second shockwave, two bars from the latticed window were blown off and pierced my back.

It really hurts.

I've heard that this Sumiyuri School's uniform was made of bullet-proof materials a long time ago, though… Too-chan was right next to the window, is she okay?

"Please don't mind it. By chance, I ended up slamming my hand on the wall facing you as if I were guarding you, but I didn't particularly cover you, Bonbori-san. It's not like I became your shield just because my name means shield."

"…Are you saying you didn't do something you did?"

Oops.

She sure touches some sore spots — it hurts more than my back.

"Please lend me your back once more for stitching the wounds… And let me drink the antibiotics. Mouth-to-mouth…"

Oh no, my eyes started getting hazy.

I will end up leaning against her even more. Damn it, I will end up headbutting her at this rate… And as if to evade that, Bonbori-san raised her upper body from the fusuma door somewhat, and then she caught me — she caught me in her arms.

She hugged me.

And then she said.

"I've done it. I killed Kunagisa Chika-sama and cut her head off. The motive was —"

— However, I didn't hear the rest of it.

The seven remaining satellites, once launched by a one-of-a-kind genius in an attempt to rule humanity, fell one after another, causing a loud explosion and a shock that drowned out the servant's motive, the servant who was treated as if she didn't exist, who killed a clone human who fundamentally had no basic human rights. The castle tower, the watchtowers, the small keep, the well, the gate, the prison chamber, the incident, the facts, the evidences, the testimonies, the culprit, the detective, the suspects, the involved parties, they all vanished without a trace, without a sign of it existing, without a single strand of hair left behind.

On this day, one World Heritage site was lost.

One of the most famous legends about Humanity's Strongest Contractor, who yields innumerable stories, is precisely this. All buildings she stepped into were destroyed, with no exceptions — and I, who inherited such a contractor's name, in this present day, reproduced her legend.

I am Kunagisa Jun. A proud shield.

Epilogue —
Blue and Red

Since there are about 200 kilometers between the Kunagisa Castle and the Nijou Castle, it takes about a week to cross this distance on foot. It's not like the proverb "a burnt child dreads the fire", but I couldn't bring myself to get on a limited express or the Shinkansen, so I aimed for walking twenty kilometers a day while enduring the pain in my back, but then, a completely red supercar came thrusting without breaking.

I won't fall for this twice.

I nimbly evaded that, or rather, well, barely evaded that by twisting my body, but then, the supercar quickly made an U-turn and stopped right by my side — I don't even need to say who was the driver.

"Hey, Jun-chan. You dodged it pretty well, didn't you? You've grown. But why are you going back alone by yourself? Without telling me. You're going back to Kyoto, right? I'll give you a ride in the passenger's seat."

"…Is it okay, Auntie Jun? If I get in it, your beloved car might end up scrapped, you know?"

"It's not equipped with any computers so it's fine, you were the one who said that before, right? And even if you destroy it, I won't mind. If I can drive with you."

If she says it like that, I can't deny this invitation.

Rather than an abduction, maybe it's a temptation… Walking all the way to Kyoto would be impossible, after all. I'm not Inou Tadataka. And not Matsuo Bashou, too. First of all, even if I say there's 200 kilometers between the Kunagisa Castle and the Nijou Castle, both of them now don't have a castle tower anymore.

And anyway, I feel more obligated to this Humanity's Strongest Contractor than to my parents now. Because she was the one who saved not only me, but all of us, while it was raining artificial satellites. Just when I thought "aah, I'm dead, dead at 15 years old", she jumped into the castle tower top floor.

She's truly my life's savior.

She assembled everyone at that place — Kunagisa Rui, Kunagisa Hoda, Kunagisa Nao, Kunagisa Too, Chiga Bonbori, and me — In an instant, and escaped faster than the satellites, faster than the gravitational acceleration, faster than Mach speed.

It wasn't even an instant.

"Even Kunagisa-chin handmade satellites had quite a speed, but they were a hundred years too late to kill me."

I couldn't help but think that, with such skills faster than the eye could see, she could have kidnapped me more smartly. There was no need to drive a car in the first place.

Even to Kyoto, she might get back to it on foot in one day.

However, even if it was a miracle that the castle was fully reserved and that there were no casualties, even for this Humanity's Strongest contractor who surpassed the relativity theory — the destruction of the Kunagisa Castle couldn't be avoided.

The nine satellites Mom launched.

Each one of them were shot down by her daughter.

"Heh-heh-heh. But you're something else. Even I still hadn't destroyed any World Heritage sites by the time I was fifteen."

"…There were a lot of troubles after that too, so I ended up forgetting to ask this, but why did you come to save us at that timing, Aunt Jun? Were you perhaps worried about me, watching over us for all that time?"

"No?"

Wait, you weren't?

Aunt Jun slammed the accelerator with her usual reckless driving, but even this fear felt like a kid's amusement ride after surviving the rain of falling satellites.

Then it's just as Aunt Jun said, although it was an adventure that lasted only two days, I might have grown somewhat too… I'm worn-out, though.

"After that, I saved the world about five times, and then, when I finally got a break, I figured that after all this trouble I'd stay overnight and do some sightseeing around here. But when I saw a huge meteorite falling from the sky, I felt it could be interesting, like a new event."

"Normally, one would run away after seeing a meteorite falling."

"Run away? Me? Why?"

In reality, it wasn't a meteorite nor a new event, it was the first artificial satellite, though… If it's that person, she might survive even if a real meteorite crushes on Earth.

"It wasn't a meteorite, but long ago, an alien once crashed right at me. That really hurt."

"C'mon, here you are again saying those things that I can't know for sure, Aunt Jun… That's awful, you know? A lying habit even after getting older."

And a follow-up like "although you say that, the truth is that you were worrying about your special friends' daughter from afar, right?" would be meaningless to Aunt Jun… However, it's also ironic that, in the end, the satellites I made fall down served as a signal fire for her to come save me.

Maybe it's even hilarious.

"I respectfully refrained from entering the World Heritage, since I thought it could make it collapse, but now that it has gotten like that, it didn't matter anymore, right? So I thought I'd take a walk around the castle tower in the World Heritage before the meteorite crashed down. I took this opportunity to try rescuing you guys then, but it seems like it all was quite troublesome, huh."

Were we saved while she was sightseeing?

Well, it's an incident that happened because of me, so I won't say anything… I swear on Kyoto Tower, I didn't do that on purpose.

"…Have you heard anything from Mom, Aunt Jun? That I, well… that I'm a so-called machine illiterate."

A destructive machine illiterate.

"Not at all? But it's something that makes sense. Nothing feels wrong with it, as the Kunagisa Tomo and the Nonsense User's daughter character setting."

Kunagisa Tomo, who was a computer expert and a genius engineer… Who gathered followers with these skills and rampaged as she pleased in her teens. Even the artificial satellites that could control humanity were almost completed. All the machines around the world were her slaves.

And the punishment for that was received by her daughter.

A revolutionary rebellion happened.

That's what it is.

All the machines became enemies and attacked me, who they despised… The satellites' operating device went out of control just because I touched it a little, and all the satellites crashed into my direction.

If there were an autonomous driving system equipped in this car, I'm sure it would run straight toward a cliff. Or maybe blow itself up.

Even though I didn't do anything — it broke.

Even before I had done anything, it broke.

Mom's Absolute Law.

Don't touch machines.

…I thought it was Spartan education, but to think it was a parent's love out of all things.

Too-chan instigated me asking why I was sure I wasn't able to use machines if I've never touched any, but for Mom, who was well experienced,

she knew what hindrance would happen if I touched a machine.

Since Mom once had worked with destroyers in both the software and hardware parts known as [Green Green Green] and [Bad Kind], she was well versed in destruction. Then, she could have just told me — is what I end up thinking. However, I also end up getting why she didn't tell me. It's not that she didn't want me to walk the same path, the same bad path she once walked… It's that she just wanted to hold back the runaway vehicle that would destroy every nook and cranny of every path, of every line of movement possible.

That's right.

What Mom feared wasn't her daughter's genius — it was her destructiveness.

"This could be what they call as 'the sins of the parents are visited upon the children', I guess. It also feels like it might be just a curse, though."

"I wonder, if I had to say, it feels like it's more because of Ii-tan's blood rather than Kunagisa-chin's blood, this thing."

"What? Dad? Dad wouldn't shoot down an artificial satellite. He's all talk."

"And with that talk, that Nonsense User has brought down countless people. Down to darkness. While using things like [unconsciousness] and [if nothing is bad], he was a super-dangerous individual, whose very touch was risky. His surroundings would go crazy even if he hadn't done anything. Just like the Nonsense User drives people mad, you probably make machines crazy."

"Isn't it the worst thing possible? How will someone like this live in this modern society?"

It's not an exaggeration.

It's not just the inconvenience of not being able to use a smartphone, it's actually a matter of life or death. It was the case this time, and it's surprising how I'm still alive after these fifteen years. The strict discipline in the dormitory that seemed old-fashioned because it prohibited smartphones ultimately saved my life by a hair's breadth then… But, what about my dream? With digital drawings becoming this much spread in the manga business, as an editor, will I need to cut things with scissors and glue it to make the photocomposition?

"I didn't say it wasn't the worst. It's [the worst that doesn't turn out the way it should]. Maybe even worse than my crap father. I also had no idea that the combination of the Blue Savand and the [Aimless Equation] would be this bad… On the other hand, their marriage has a perfect chemistry, I guess. But wasn't it good this way? With this, your grandparents aren't going to ask me to kidnap you anymore, right?"

“Not only that, but I was also disowned. And I hadn’t even reconciled with them yet.”

Originally, they kidnapped Kunagisa Tomo’s daughter to force her into maintaining, and ultimately improving, the anthropogenic satellites. And these artificial satellites all crashed down without even needing to be shot by tactical nuclear weapons. Not only they didn’t have any use for me, but this kidnapping victim completely destroyed the World Heritage building owned by the Kunagisa Syndicate.

It’s a loss big enough to make Kunagisa Syndicate’s fortune decline.

Although it may have covered up the not illegal but ethically “off” anthropogenic satellites that could control human flow, this won’t serve of any consolation due to the scale of that loss.

There’s no heritage for the girl who destroyed the World Heritage building.

“Ahaha. Maybe that crater will be assigned as a World Heritage someday, you know? That’s how things are.”

“That would be nice, though… Grandpa Rui called me not just useless but actually a plague, and I got a harsh scolding from the castle’s master Grandma Hoda. To think that when she finally said something, it was to scold me… Grandmas being always kind is an illusion, isn’t it?”

“The grandchildren being always lovable is also an illusion, though.”

I have no words.

As for Uncle Nao, it seems he was pondering whether this machine illiteracy of mine could be applied in business somehow… That’s what Too-chan sneakily told me beforehand, so I lost my mind and had to escape without even getting my injuries properly treated.

“Uni. I’ll write you a letter, Hii-sama.”

Too-chan said and sent me off, after she obtained for me an escape route from the Kunagisa Syndicate’s temporary shelter… Exchanging letters in this age, although it’s an old-fashioned way, when it comes to my nature, it’s the only way.

Even then, to say it to someone like me, that was the main reason for this huge destruction, and whose ties with the Kunagisa Family were broken off; in the end, you really are a blue-haired and blue-eyed special child. And a special cousin to me.

“Thanks, Too-chan. Let’s play with temari balls next summer vacation.”

So I replied.

I wonder if this conversation was my modest gain in this kidnapping

uproar — I didn't get any New Year's gifts, but I got memories. Although I do worry about her future now that her twin sister was killed, but since they found out I'm useless, one could say that, if Grandpa Rui evaluation of her proportionately raises because of that, her place as the only remaining Kunagisa Tomo's copy may be safe for a while.

Also —

"…I wonder, what will happen to Bonbori-san from now on? She often said so herself, that she isn't someone from the Kunagisa Syndicate, so won't things go beyond the level of covering it up now…?"

"It's fine, it's fine. She told us her three mothers are working on a remote island, right? She'll probably be exiled there"

I don't know whether that's fine, though… However, well, the artificial satellites blew up the crime scene and everything more. Even if you put aside the victim being a human clone without registration or human rights, it's not like she'll turn herself in to the police.

Putting aside what will happen for my hopes for the future, with this, Bonbori-san's dream of working in the Wet Crow's Feather Island may actually become true.

I have mixed feelings when I think about it, but in the first place, as the greatest criminal of the century, who reduced the World Heritage site to smithereens, I have no right to blame her that much for the mere killing and beheading of a 13-year-old girl.

And also, I don't pretend to.

Because I heard her reason.

"…So Bonbori-san is a clone too, right? I mean… The clone of the maids she referred to as her three mothers."

"Who knows. If she said that, it must be true, right? She may be only convinced that's the truth, though."

What a laid-back person…

After we were rescued from the collapsing castle tower, Bonbori-san told me once again, her "crime's motive". It was not a speech, but Bonbori-san told me her reason, without kidding about it.

A cloning experiment's result even before the twins Kunagisa Too and Kunagisa Chika were created. No, it's actually the result from the animal experiment done in order to manufacture a Kunagisa Tomo's copy.

That was what she told me.

The 14-year-old maid-san and the 13-year-old twins.

It matches up in terms of age. That was the reason for *killing a 13-year-old girl*.

The descendent of the maid family that serves one of the Four Mirrors and One God having an apprentice period at Kunagisa Syndicate was also related to that fact… Since it also served as a follow-up observation of the only successful case.

The only successful case.

Conversely, there were tons of failure cases.

"Hehehe. Well, her three mothers are almost like clones too. Perhaps the ulterior motive of the Akagami Conglomerate to mass produce excellent maids unexpectedly conveniently matched Kunagisa Syndicate's intention of remaking the Blue Savant."

"Remaking…"

"Or as my crap father would call it, it would be a 'jail alternative', I guess. Well, at least it's a concept easier to explain than 'back nozzle'."

That's a unique father, huh.

That said, at least for this time, it certainly hits the nail on the head.

"The ones that failed at that *same period* she was produced… In other words, she killed Chika-chan because she wanted to take revenge for her sisters, that was what she said. Well, in reality, it seems it might have been a more impulsive act, though…"

She said she didn't plan it.

The way she had lost her composure when she went to call me at the prison cell wasn't acting either… Bonbori-san had just killed someone at that time, so she wasn't in her normal mental conditions at all.

I really couldn't understand why she was killed that night and at that timing, but that was trivial, is just that her urge to kill was so much that it wouldn't be weird if she committed the murder at any time, at any timing.

That night, when I was talking with Too-chan in the prison cell — Chika-chan, as if to follow her sister's line of flow, followed her movements to the castle tower's third floor, so she entered that room as well.

To help her convince me.

Too-chan's half-minded hypothesis that her sister was imitating her was actually the closest to her sister's true nature. The difference was that, unlike Too-chan, after knowing I wasn't in the guest room, instead of going to the underground prison, she went to ask Bonbori-san, who was on the same floor, about it. It seems she woke up the maid-san to ask about my whereabouts. This

uninhibited behavior feels like “Dead Blue” dead copy in fact, but it’s not like being woken up by her was the reason for the murder.

It wasn’t that.

The young sister that follows around her older sister.

She couldn’t tolerate her existence — so she killed her.

Like someone who envies another person of the same sex for having a lover, she envied a clone like her being able to have a little sister. Then, maybe her true target wasn’t Chika-chan, but rather the older sister, Too-chan. Although the twins’ swapping didn’t happen… What? Did she kill someone just because of this?

Yes.

She killed someone just because of this.

She didn’t need any other motive besides that.

Money, control, power, experiments, heritages, inheritance, coercion, hierarchy, she didn’t need any of that. What she wanted was —

“She told me she thought of me as her own sister, but maybe Bonbori-san always wanted to have sisters. Maybe she took my small talk seriously.”

“I wonder. Maybe it’s all a lie, you know? Maybe Ii-tan being the father was the truth after all. It bears quite an authenticity to it.”

You’re saying that too…?

But, yeah, no one knows for sure what is the truth after all… I feel even Bonbori-san doesn’t know.

However, in my speech, I deducted that Bonbori-san swapped the tatami with the corpse from her room to my guestroom just because I happened to be absent, and now that I heard she knew I wasn’t there after Chika-chan asked her, I can think that was the reason even more, but.

Rather than incriminating me, rather than imposing the corpse to me… I kinda think now that it was like the feelings of a younger sister being at a loss because she couldn’t deal with something, and then deciding to leave the whole problem to her older sister.

It’s how I understand it.

I understand Chiga Bonbori.

That girl who was like my little sister and that killed someone just because of that.

“Hehehe, that makes sense. She did seem to be acting haphazardly by doing things like throwing the head in the well, and then, when the suspicion turned to a possible outsider, she hurried and pretended she had discovered it by herself. Maybe she wanted to make it look like an internal crime, so the Kunagisa Syndicate would cover it up. She made quite a mess, huh.”

“And she became a chair again when I needed to remove the wooden fragments that stabbed at my back. She didn’t give me the antibiotics mouth-to-mouth, though.”

“There’s something wrong with an older sister like that too. Aah, now that you mentioned, I had a younger sister once too. An android named Yuigahama Puniko. She was a cute one.

“A robot sister… you’re going far ahead of us aren’t you, Aunt Jun? Please don’t introduce Puniko-san to me. I’ll end up wrecking her.”

“Don’t worry, I wrecked her already. I shoved a grenade inside her mouth.”

All families have their own issues.

It’s not like mine is special… The Kunagisa household, the Chiga family, and the Aikawa family too… They all have pressing circumstances.

It’s just that. Life isn’t determined by something like that only.

Well, most of someone’s life is actually determined by their family, but if I say something like this in the last scene, well, it won’t suit it well. What should be said in the last scene isn’t the truth, but rather—

“By the way, Jun-chan. What do you plan on doing from now on?”

“What? What are you talking about, Aunt Jun?”

“Well, it’s fine for you to worry about Bonbori and Too-chan too, but… Shouldn’t you be worrying about yourself instead?”

While still flooring the gas pedal, Aunt Jun asked me that. I feel that, if she wanted to run that fast, she should have gone to the highway, but it seems she wants to enjoy her drive with me the longer she can, while still running faster than an artificial satellite. I can only hope Aunt Jun’s doing it because she’s enjoying talking with me, though.

“Worrying about myself, you say?”

“You’re just completely troubled by that, but depending on how you use it, this “machine illiteracy” can be extremely useful. Because it can destroy a machine no matter how high-security it is… All existing machines are your enemy, but on the other hand, Kunagisa Jun is the natural enemy of all existing machines. High-tech weapons aren’t even a match for you. Aren’t there lots and lots of scoundrels wanting to misuse this power of yours, which could

knock down all servers around the world?

"……"

Was it that Uncle Nao's plan of applying it to business could be labeled as peaceful then…? I don't know in what direction this just discovered bottomless power will go. I don't know where it will go, and where it will reach.

This power that ultimately might lead not only machines out of control, but me as well.

Don't touch machines. Don't touch machines. Don't touch machines.

However, is something like this even possible…? If in modern society, it's already in this situation, from now on, the machines will evolve more and more. Technology will progress with no signs of stopping. Maybe it won't be like human clones or androids, but in just twenty years from now, the difference between living beings and machines may be lost.

It may sound like a joke, but I'm serious about it.

I'm always saying it seriously.

On the other hand, for how long will this world ignore someone like me, who may end up destroying the world as easily as heating frozen food in the microwave? I wonder where in this world there could be a place where I can settle down.

A place where I can be sound asleep, as in that isolated prison cell.

"Answer me, Proud Shield. Where are you going from now on?"

The chaos that will arrive someday, the coming and going destruction, the doom with a future — Aunt Jun laughed as if to be amused with all of them from the bottom of her heart. Like how her father used to laugh about the end of the world.

Laughing as if she was just kidding.

Even if it breaks although I didn't do anything, I won't say that I didn't do something I did. Because if I do so, I will stop being myself.

The Blue Savant and the Nonsense User' daughter.

That's me. However, not all of me.

"I"

I thought for a bit and then laughed back at her.

"I won't go anywhere else anymore."

“I will go back home.”

Dad’s Nonsense Series - No. 100.

It’s just nonsense, though.

<<Our daughter>> is the END.

When I hear arguments saying that, even though if Earth were born at January 1st's midnight, humanity would have appeared on December 31st, in a way to suggest that humans had inflicted such damage on their home planet, I cannot help but shudder at the horrifying evil of this life form. But on the other hand, I feel humanity shouldn't be judged with just about one day. I can't help but get an impression similar to "pointing out that using a spoon to roll pasta is bad manners itself is even worse manners". We should see it from a longer span perspective — even if you decide that based on this first impression, you don't really know anything about humanity, do you? It makes me want to say "well, well, the New Year is almost here, so let's forget all the bad stuff that happened this year and welcome the next one with a fresh mind". Speaking in terms of Doomsday Clock, I end up thinking that, even without human factors, the Earth, its ecosystems, and everything actually, have come close to annihilation many times over this far. Plants and dinosaurs aren't necessarily one-sided victims, when it comes to messing things up, you could say they've done their fair share of messing things up… A lot of different things like glacial periods and asteroids had happened, and even then, we were able to reach December 31st like this, right? That's not the world's end, but rather, a year's end, so… In the first place, this hypothesized time schedule of Earth ending its natural life span on December 31st itself seems quite uncertain. If we were to assume that it was midsummer right now, at what time would we be? When you put it like that, won't midnight inevitably arrive, regardless of what humanity does or doesn't do…?

And so, this book is the Zaregoto Series' proud sequel. I guess it's more of a vertical sequel than a horizontal one, just like in Kunagisa "Jun"[82]. That is to say, although this series' world itself has been written continuously for a long time in various different forms, such as the Ningen Series and the Saikyou Series[83], I would be lying if I said I wasn't worried about what it would feel like if it was a direct continuation. Although it's a series I'm so familiar with, that saying it didn't make me feel safe would be not just a lie but nonsense — after all, is there really something like a continuation for a series that was concluded 17 years ago? However, if you look at it from a different perspective, I feel it's not just because I'm the writer that I should decide its December 31st. Hence, rather than celebrating my 20 years anniversary as a professional writer, I decided to write it more because I was struck with an idea for a title that felt like the Zaregoto Series. But anyway, this book, which feels that was not an ending or a beginning, but actually a continuation, was the Zaregoto Series "Kidnap Kidding - The Blue Savant and The Nonsense User's Daughter".

At the same time, it wouldn't be an exaggeration if I said this "proud shield" was born to be drawn by Take-san. And that's why there's no doubt The Blue Savant and The Nonsense User's Daughter's parents are thankful to Take-san as much as I am. To Kodansha's Literature 3rd Department that let me write this book, and to you readers that washed your necks and waited

patiently for it[84] — my maximum thank you.

Nisio Isin

This book is a newly written work.

Swyfer's Translation Extra — Dad's Nonsense Series

Originally, each physical copy of this novel had a bookmark with one item from "Dad's Nonsense Series" and "Mom's Absolute Law" written on it. They were 101 in total, with Mom's Absolute Rule as the #0 and the other 100 being the "Dad's Nonsense Series". In this translation, I attempted to follow the original version's structure for each item for the sake of preserving the original idea, so that's why the formatting may feel a bit weird for some of them.

You can take a look at how the bookmarks were in this image: https://pbs.twimg.com/media/Fx8Ag6GaMAAH8TW.jpg

No. 0
Mom's Absolute Law.
Don't touch machines.

No. 1
First of all, introduce yourself. No matter who you're talking to.
Then, make them introduce themselves. No matter who they are.

No. 2.
Dream on. Rather than living in a dreamlike state.

No. 3
You think you're the only one different from everyone else?
Everyone does that themselves.

No. 4.
Hire a maid inside your heart.

No. 5.
Share it with those who understand.[85]

No. 6.
Culture eventually becomes dead letters.[86]

No. 7.
Updating is not enough.
Upgrade instead.

No. 8.
Do not fear failure.
Do not fear success.
Fear punishment[64] only.

No. 9.
Different names must not be laughed at.
A different name is a well thought name.

No. 10.
To have your own way,

You need to have an “own”.

No. 11.
Attack is the best form of defeat.
Especially a preemptive attack.

No. 12.
Is this proper noun really proper?
Isn’t it empty?[87]

No. 13.
The equality below laws is unrelated to individuals above the clouds.

No. 14.
Don’t be complex, be messy.[88]

No. 15.
There is only one truth,
But this one has several forms.

No. 16.
Right to remain silent? Precisely because one doesn’t have any secrets,
It may be why they remain silent.

No. 17.
Take a straight look at the narrowness of your field of vision.

No. 18.
Don’t be afraid of contradictions.
Double standards won’t always lead to double binds.

No. 19.
All things are named.

No. 20.
Whether a child grows up by watching their parents’ backs or not,
Can’t be assured by turning your back on them.[89]

No. 21.
Buy souvenirs for your beloved children.[90]

No. 22.
It can’t be helped if you weren’t able to prevent the first incident.
Take all responsibility for the second incident.
Or else you will be the cause of the third incident.

No. 23.
Cherish life.
Anyone’s life. Even yours.

No. 24.
From the perspective of those who have been discriminated this far,

Mere equality is inequality.

No. 25.
For the same extent that you can make things easier,
Raise the quality of them.

No. 26.
Life's timetable is full of misprints.

No. 27.
Don't be noticed by the truth you noticed.

No. 28.
Don't miss their intentions.
Because, even if they look entangled,
Maybe they're just knitted.[43]

No. 29.
Sometimes, rebellion over reflection.

No. 30.
Just because you want to make things tidy and organized,
Don't go out of your way to mess up your room.

No. 31.
Appearances can deceive people 90% of the time.

No. 32.
If you are an imitation,
At least make the effort of imitating.

No. 33.
When believing fortune-telling,
Believe in yourself even more.

No. 34.
The strongest feeling is regret.[91]

No. 35.
"Normal" is normally a compliment.

No. 36.
Not always
The real intention is the real motive.

No. 37.
Contradicting premises can coexist.

No. 38.
There is no heritage more important than life.

No. 39.

Move. Not for anyone's sake. Not because of anyone's fault.

No. 40.
Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from superstition.

No. 41.
Is the dream now when we are butterflies?
Or is it now when we are pupa that it is a dream?[92]

No. 42.
Instead of unifying your goals,
Unify your enemies.

No. 43.
To diet is to grin and wait loss.[93]

No. 44.
The rabbit who takes breaks while running
Is quite reasonable.

No. 45.
If you esteem quality of life,
Care about the quality of your death as well.

No. 46.
Laugh if you want to.
It is in times you are drowning you have to cling the most.

No. 47.
Take it as a trick and try tricking.[72]

No. 48.
If there were two moons,
You would want one more.
Without even knowing you would be fine with just one.

No. 49.
Cherish words that begin with "A".
Appreciative, amour, ardor.
Even if it's average, even if it's amazing,
Even after arguments, even after abandoning,
Authentic and just as you are,
Accept it and keep advancing,
As you accelerate ahead.

No. 50.
Keep thinking for all your life.
Do it while being aware that the answer won't come.

No. 51.
The "translating necklace as neckless"
Way of thinking

No. 52.
Alibi. For someone without a place to belong,
That's a cruel word.

No. 53.
Forgive the ones you feel you cannot forgive.
Do not forgive the ones who think they will be forgiven.

No. 54.
Good exceptions make good neighbors.

No. 55.
Even if your livings don't have leeway,
You must have leeway in the way you live.

No. 56.
Rather than whether God exists or not,
Whether you exist or not is more important.

No. 57.
A naked emperor, compared to an emperor in military uniform,
Is still preferable.

No. 58.
Hierarchy in fact exists,
But you'd better be sure
If its shape is a pyramid or a spinning top.

No. 59.
Life is tied by a red string.

No. 60.
Happiness isn't tying up the loose ends from
The misfortune you had so far.

No. 61.
Being silent is the same as approving.
Or rather, the same as being dead.

No. 62.
The difference between neglecting and abandoning can't be ignored.

No. 63.
No matter how embarrassing it is, shame won't kill a person.

No. 64.
They say "catching neither the horsefly nor the bee",
But what I want to catch is butterflies and rhinoceros beetles.

No. 65.
The power to protect is strong.
Especially the power to protect vested interests.

No. 66.
Interference is already over-interference.
Keep it to mere appreciation.[94]

No. 67.
Be a minority that respects diversity.

No. 68.
There are no ifs in history, but there are fabrications.

No. 69.
Read between the lines. Just like you read humans.

No. 70.
Don't wish to be understood.
Since you're not even understanding.

No. 71.
Aspire to embrace defeat.[95]

No. 72.
If you're good at keeping secrets, don't let them know it.

No. 73.
Rather than preparing for the one in ten-thousand scenario,
Prepare for the other 9999 ones.

No. 74.
A river's flood or people's rebellion, which one is scarier?[96]

No. 75.
Not feeling guilty is the true guilt.

No. 76.
Creative work is the act of creating wounds.[97]

No. 77.
Not having a trump card is the biggest trump card.

No. 78.
Do not fear repetition.

No. 79.
Do not fear repetition.

No. 80.
Nothing good comes from being stubborn,
But doing it is not a bad thing.

No. 81.
The act of someone justifying themselves as if they're right is in itself correct.

No. 82.
They say “birds of a feather flock together”,
But these birds won’t always get along.

No. 83.
Whose *Jimensou*[98] would you like to become?

No. 84.
Cowardice is wisdom, not a disease.[99]

No. 85.
Give praise. Or maybe curse.[100]

No. 86.
What happens twice won’t happen again.

No. 87.
Treasure your friends.
Because one could die tomorrow.[68]

No. 88.
Long ago, the saying “he who makes fun of one yen will cry at one yen”
Was actually “he who makes fun of one *sen* will cry at one *sen*“.
Although this proverb was changed to match the current money value,
Isn’t it exactly what a person who laughs at one *sen* would do?

No. 89.
Walk the crosswalk by crossing it vertically.

No. 90.
Don’t trust it just because it’s the truth.

No. 91.
Become an irreplaceable substitute.

No. 92.
If you keep your eyes closed,
Teleportation is easy.

No. 93
Let go of what you cannot repair.
Even if it is your heart.

No. 94.
Would you rather die of thirst in the desert or die by drowning at sea?
Die drowning in a desert oasis, or
Die of thirst on a ship at sea?

No. 95.
Allow retorts. As it is better than being laughed scornfully.

No. 96.

They say giraffes' necks are long,
But their legs are quite long too.

No. 97.
If it is a job anyone could do,
Do it before someone else does it.

No. 98.
There is nothing more precious than love.
However, even if it's precious,
It won't always have value.

No. 99.
You should not accumulate points,
You should rather grasp the key ones.

No. 100.
It's just nonsense, though.

1. [↩] The literal meaning is just as translated, but there are some word puns with that:
   Jun's name kanji: 盾 (shield - Tate/Jun).
   誇らしき盾 - A proud shield.
   矛らしき盾 - A lance-like shield.
   Both can be pronounced as "hokorashiki tate".
   Although it could also be "I'm proudly Jun" since the shield kanji's reading is not specified in furigana, the voice actress for Kunagisa Jun in the commercial video for this book on YouTube said "hokorashiki tate", so we're going with that.
2. [↩] Nonsense Series here (and in all the other times that will come) is written in Japanese just as they write Zaregoto Series (戯言シリーズ).
3. [↩] 一度ならず、二度三度。四度五度六度百八十度
   Lit.: Not only one, two or three. Four, five, six, 180 times (written the same as 180°).
4. [↩] 虫がいい - Selfish (虫 - Insect).
   害虫のように虫がいい。 - Selfish like a poisoning bug.
5. [↩] Traditional Japanese teacups with proverbial texts printed on them.
6. [↩] Shield - 盾 - Jun.
7. [↩] Hanako is a common girl's name and Tarou a common male's name, both were names so common in certain periods it actually got a bit less frequent in the past few decades.
8. [↩] As in "shield".
9. [↩] A pun with the book called The Devil Comes and Blows a Flute (悪魔が来りて笛を吹く), also known in English as "The Devil's Flute Murders".
10. [↩] Common saying referring to what kids should do while crossing crosswalks.
11. [↩] Written in English literally like this in the original as well.
12. [↩] 撥ねられた (hanerareta) - To be hit, like by a car.
    刎ねられた (hanerareta) - To be cut off, like in a neck being decapitated.
13. [↩] Crosswalk in Japanese is literally horizontal walkway, so the whole thing is word plays about this name, the lines being horizontal and the walking direction being perpendicular to that, and thus, being vertical, contrasting with the expression for crosswalk.
14. [↩] Butterfly and exaggeration can be both said as "kochou" here. Also, it refers to a famous Zhuangzi parable too.
15. [↩] It seems to refer to a permit given to what could be called as "early-17th-century equivalent of present-day yakuza".
16. [↩] Joke with shibainu (species of dog) and shibashiba (frequently).
17. [↩] Word play about niece in Japanese being "mei" and Aunt May.
18. [↩] Word play with 家庭人-kateijin (house/family person) and martian (火星人-kaseijin).
19. [↩] The words for hospital and beauty parlor are quite similar in Japanese (but not the same).
    Hospital - 病院 (Byouin).
    Beauty Parlor - 美容院 (Biyouin).
20. [↩] Now said as hospital in katakana instead of 病院.
21. [↩] The words for death year and last year are quite similar in Japanese

(but not the same).
Last year - 去年 (Kyonen).
Death year - 享年 (Kyounen).

22. [↩] You may search more about comedy duos and its relation to Osaka if you want.
23. [↩] Said in katakana'd english in the original text.
24. [↩] 絶縁 can mean both isolation (in the relationship nuance) or insulation (in the electrical/thermal way).
25. [↩] Anne of the Green Gables Japanese title could be translated as "Redhead Anne".
26. [↩] 切妻/Kirizuma - Gable.
新妻/Niizuma - New Wife.
27. [↩] Get formal/to respect/etc - 畏まる (kashikomaru).
Understood (said in a formal tone) - 畏まりました (kashikomarimashita).
28. [↩] Clever - 賢い (kashikoi). Following the jokes with kashikomaru and kashikomarimashita.
29. [↩] The expression used for suspicious here is きな臭い (kinakusai), which is literally "smells of kina". It's theorized that this once referred of the smell of materials such paper and cloth being burned.
30. [↩] Nisio used a kanji for castle (城 - jou) in replacement of the woman kanji (女 - jo) present in Japanese equivalent of Queen Bee, that's also a book title (女王蜂).
31. [↩] In Japanese castles, it is the name for the main building in the castle site.
32. [↩] The word that Aikawa Jun used originally was うはうは (uha-uha). After Kunagisa Jun says it's not used much recently, she replies saying うにうに (uni-uni), which may be a reference to the onomatopoeia Kunagisa Tomo frequently said in the original series.
33. [↩] Both below are said as "chiga":
血が - The blood […].
千賀 - The surname "Chiga" from Chiga Bonbori.
34. [↩] The kanji for Too (read as "Toh" and also adapted in the original images in this novel as "To") means "distant" here, while the one for Chika means "near".
35. [↩] A reference for the book 犬神家の一族, lit. "The Inugami Family", but might be known in English as "The Inugami Curse".
36. [↩] Bonbori here said top floor (最上階 - saijoukai) as (最城階 - saijoukai, but with the kanji of castle instead of 上 for up), since both readings are the same and possibly there isn't any known pitch accent for this word Nisio made up, it might be a text-only kind of joke.
37. [↩] もやしっ子 - Moyashikko: weak, frail child.
もやもや - Moyamoya: gloomy, pent-up feeling.
38. [↩] While the castle's top word play was explained another note before, there's also this one this time:
登頂/touchou - Summit.
到着/touchaku - Arrival.
39. [↩] A lot of yo's in the original: 世が世なら余の孫だ - Yo ga yo nara yo no mago da.
40. [↩] Japanese stereotypical old people way of speaking.

41. [↩] Inner palace is 大奥 (oooku) while wife is 奥さん (oku-san). Also, the sitcom Bewitched is called “奥様は魔女” (oku-sama wa majo - The Wife is a Witch).
42. [↩] Here now is basically Nisio making word puns about secondary meanings of “oku-san” and “tsuma” that aren’t really related with the main meaning of “wife”, since both words are ways to say “wife” in Japanese.
43. [↩] Intention (意図) and the word for thread/string/etc (糸) can both be read as “ito”.
44. [↩] The Asian red string of fate myth.
45. [↩] 働く (hataraku) - To work.
悪事を働く (akuji wo hataraku) - To commit crimes/wrongdoings (lit. to work wrongdoings).
46. [↩] The first kanji in each name is a number from 1 to 9. The seventh is literally “Seventh Name” so that’s why it has (temporary) on it.
47. [↩] Parting gift - 置き土産 - lit. left (behind) gift.
48. [↩] A reference for Yatsuhakamura, but written as The Village of Nine Graves (Kokonotsuhakamura) instead of the original The Village of Eight Graves.
49. [↩] Original: 順を追って jun wo shitagatte (lit. following the order (jun), meaning from start to end). Another joke with Jun’s name again.
50. [↩] A variant form of mahjong with three players.
51. [↩] Niche (in the meaning used in architecture) - 壁龕 (hekigan).
Blue eyes - 碧眼 (hekigan).
52. [↩] I decided to leave it as in the original, since it’s a very specific term, but you could take it as something like young miss or little mistress, a (old) form to refer to a noble’s young daughter.
53. [↩] 近 (Chika).
近い (Chikai - close/near).
近親憎悪 (Kinshinzouo - hatred towards near relatives).
近親相姦 (Kinshisoukan - incest).
54. [↩] Jun’s name kanji can be read as Tate too. And chin can be a friendly honorific. And as mentioned, both ways of calling her coincide to be mahjong *yakus*.
55. [↩] The “clever tactic” here is “搦め手” in the original, which can also mean “force attacking the rear of a castle”.
56. [↩] Can be pronounced the same way as 白蝋仮面 (Wax Mask), a book’s title, but written in this joke as 白老仮面 (translated here as White Old Mask). Both are read as “Hakurou Kamen”.
57. [↩] 拘束 (kousoku) - restrain.
梗塞 (kousoku) - block/stoppage.
58. [↩] The word 首切り (kubikiri) can be used for layoffs as well.
59. [↩] The original for this one is 双生児はささやか (souseiji wa sasayaka), which refers to the book 双生児は囁く (souseiji wa sasayaku - The Twins Whisper).
60. [↩] Nisio used expressions with the same reading (shinshi) for both sincere and gentleman.
61. [↩] 能ある鷹 - Nou aru taka (skillful eagle).
ノワール鷹 - Nowaaru taka (noir eagle).
62. [↩] The word used here, 確信犯 (kakushinhan) originally meant crime

of conscience, when someone commits a crime believing it was the right thing to do. But now, this expression is often used to mean premeditated crime.

63. [↩] In the original: 獄門問う (gokumon tou). It refers to this book: 獄門島 (gokumon-tou - Prison Gates' Island, or maybe Hell Gates' Island).
64. [↩] The word used for punishment here, 成敗 (seibai) - punishment/judgement is made with the first kanji for success (成功 - seikou) and the last kanji for failure (失敗 - shippai).
65. [↩] A Japanese saying about investigating the crime scene thoroughly even if it's the 100th time you've been there.
66. [↩] The original expression here has the literal meaning of "having your hair on the back of your head pulled".
67. [↩] Written in this book as 青髪忌 (aogamiki), it refers to a book called 青髪鬼 (also aogamiki, but meaning blue haired ogre (Japanese "Oni")).
68. [↩] The original could be interpreted as both "you could die" or "they could die", so I choosed "one" for it to be able to mean both.
69. [↩] She's referring to a hallway in the Himeji Castle that is also located in its western wing. "Hyakken" literally means 100 *ken*, which is approx. 300 meters. But the expression can just mean "very long".
70. [↩] The gallows in Japanese is written literally as stair of thirteen steps, but its true meaning is gallows, so normally would be "watch your step" using 足元 (ashimoto) for step in this case, but since it's a joke with a gallows, the original has neck's bottom instead: 首元 (kubimoto).
71. [↩] The original is 本心殺人事件 (honshin satsujin jiken), a pun with the book named 本陣殺人事件 (honjin satsujin jiken).
72. [↩] This one is indeed tricky. "Take it as a trick" here is an adaptation for "騙されたと思って", which is literally "think as if you had been fooled to do it", but in reality, means something more like "believe me, just try it". However, in this case, it is referring to try to fool someone "騙してみろ", which forms this sentence in the original as "騙されたと思って騙してみろ". Hence, a more literal translation would be "Think as if you had been tricked by me and start tricking people."
73. [↩] In the original, it was said 二条 (the castle's name) and にじょう (lit. just nijou in hiragana). じょう can be the reading for the counter for tatami mats (畳)".
74. [↩] A Japanese proverb which means that one should be satisfied without desiring something more than the necessary.
75. [↩] One *sen* is a hundredth of a yen.
76. [↩] Although with different kanji, both the castle and "two tatami-mats" can be read as "Nijou".
77. [↩] The words used here for motive and heartbeat have different kanji but the same reading: "douki".
78. [↩] The cliff's edge expression used here in Japanese can also be used as "dangerous situation".
79. [↩] Incontestable proof: 動かぬ証拠 (ugokanu shouko - lit. unmovable proof).
    動いた証拠 (ugoita shouko): The proof you moved […].
80. [↩] To turn oneself in: 自首 (oneself + neck/head).
81. [↩] Since all chapters' titles were references to mystery books, although this epilogue title is quite simple, it may also be a reference, which is for

the book “Le rouge et le noir”, since its title in Japanese is 赤と黒, similar to this epilogue (青と赤).

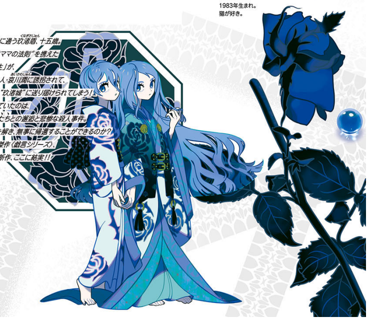
82. [↩] Vertical = 縦向き (tate-muki - lit. oriented vertically).
And then, Jun’s name is written with the kanji for shield (盾), which can be read as “tate” as well.
83. [↩] Or lit. Human Series and Strongest Series.
84. [↩] An expression that once referred to the waiting after one washing their neck until them actually being beheaded. Now, usually used just to imply a long wait, but in this case an obvious joke with decapitation as well.
85. [↩] To share: 分ける/wakeru.
To understand: 分かる/wakaru.
86. [↩] Culture: 文化/bunka.
To become dead letters: 空文化する/kuubun-ka suru. (空 - “kuu” in this case has the meaning of empty)
87. [↩] Proper noun: 固有名詞 (koyuu meishi).
Empty: 虚無 (kyomu).
In this case, each isolated kanji from “koyuu” can be interpreted as the opposite meanings from each isolated kanji from “kyomu”.
88. [↩] 複雑/fukuzatsu - complex/complicated.
雑/zatsu - messy/rough.
89. [↩] “A child grows up by watching their parents’ backs” is a proverb which means a child doesn’t learn only from their parents’ words, but also from their actions.
90. [↩] A joke with the original proverb “Let your beloved children travel”, which means to let your children experience hardships and challenges.
91. [↩] The word used for feeling here is 念/nen, and for regret is 無念/munen, with 無 meaning “nothing” or the suffix “un-“.
92. [↩] A reference to a famous Zhuangzi parable.
93. [↩] Diet: ダイエット (daietto).
Grin and bear it: やせ我慢 (yasegaman).
The pun here is that やせ我慢 means literally endure and loss weight.
94. [↩] The word for interference and over-interference is especially used in the context of raising children.
Also, the word for appreciation had a Gikun (義訓) with “watching over”.
95. [↩] Defeat - 負け.
To Embrace - 抱く.
Aspire - 抱負.
96. [↩] The words used for flood and rebellion in this case can both be read as “hanran”.
97. [↩] Creative work - 創作 (sousaku).
Wound - 創 (kizu).
98. [↩] Youkai that appears as someone’s facial tumor that resembles a face.
99. [↩] 臆病 (okubyou) - Cowardice.
病 (yamai/byou) - Disease.
100. [↩] To praise - 称える/tataeru.
To curse - 祟る/tataru.

人に優しく慈悲深く、優秀で有能で
万能で、そして何より魅力的――
その上で天才だなんて人間に、
出会い続けた20年でした。
おかげさまでまだなんとか、
首の皮一枚繋がってます。

From NISIOISIN

キドナプキディング
青色サヴァンと戯言遣いの娘
西尾維新

私立澄百合学園に通う玖渚盾、十五歳。
"パパの戯言"と"ママの法則"を携えた
「平凡な女子高生」が、
人類最強の請負人・哀川潤に誘拐されて、
玖渚機関の牙城"玖渚城"に送り届けられてしまう!
彼女を待ち受けていたのは、
青髪青眼の少女たちとの邂逅と悲惨な殺人事件。
はたして盾は謎を解き、無事に帰還することができるのか?
新青春エンタの傑作〈戯言シリーズ〉、
大団円の先の最新作、ここに結実!!



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